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'ENLIGHTENED' EDUCATION

A Discussion of
The Young Child and Cultural Problems.

IT would be perhaps useful to begin by making a rough classification of educationalists. My reasons for so doing will be apparent later; at present we shall know thereby more clearly whom we are discussing. I generalise, therefore, four ' classes ':

a. Those who are *seriously* and intelligently concerned with cultural or psychological problems—a very small minority.

b. The ' enlightened ' parents and teachers of the ' New Era ' or ' New Ideals Fellowship '—Froebel and Montessori teachers, craftwork experts, etc.

c. Those who accept as right and healthy the conventional education of the prep. schools and public schools. To these class *b* are chiefly anathema; class *a* either ignored or classed with Communism, so-called obscene novels and much else as dangerous and unhealthy.

d. Those to whom education means instruction; not being concerned with moral or cultural problems at all, they do not concern us in this essay.

Class *c*, also, I don't feel it is necessary to discuss in much detail. Their prejudices are often enough and rightly attacked, but they are too obviously a stumbling block to trouble the personal discrimination, if not the eventual existence, of the intelligent. It is rather the subtler danger presented by the 'enlightened' educationalists that I feel to call for present analysis, more particularly in the face of the somewhat careless and complacent approval given to them by admittedly intelligent people.

One number of the *New Era* will give anyone the necessary pass-words of ' enlightened ' education. The child is taught to ' express ' itself through composition, through handwork, through ' freedom '; to learn by the ' play-way,' by individual work and attention; usually, to absorb by example and otherwise an ideal of collective service. To me, forewarned, it seems that the very humanistic idealism of these ' pass-words ' ought to be a danger-signal clear enough to make us suspect, at least:

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(i) That the educationalists who use them have probably very little idea of what they are really doing.

(ii) Concurrently, that what they think they are doing bears small relation to cultural reality.

That these suspicions are well-founded I fully believe. To substantiate them it is obviously impossible to review *New Era* education in one lump; this must be done gradually. It does not however seem unfair to educators such as Froebel and Decroly to see as a constant background and type the work of Dr. Montessori, who would seem, moreover, the hardest to attack in face of her undoubted ability and the almost fanatical conviction of her followers.

Montessori sets out, in her own words, to produce 'the civilised child.'[1] What this means we shall see. She was intelligent enough to realise that the educator, especially the 'infant' educator, must deal not only with the child's intellect but more constantly with his practical abilities. Her system evolved on practical lines. The children were taught to distinguish, to match, colours, sounds, tactile feelings, scents. They were taught economy (and 'beauty') of movement—how to carry a chair, to strew rose-petals, to wash up, even to scratch gracefully and without unnecessary movement. I am certain that she was right in supposing that most children enjoyed the sense of mastery this gave them, as their play was taken up into the business of being educated.

The didactic apparatus followed. By long practice the children were able to 'feel' and 'see' their letters and their numbers—at their own trained speeds they began to get a mastery over the environment supplied to them by adult life. They began to concentrate on this achievement.

That was enough. Had Montessori been a genius she might have stopped there. But she did not. The moment the children began to concentrate she might have seen that too much of the child's energy was in danger of being absorbed into an artificial world.[2] She had not told the child to concentrate, but she was

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[1]From a student's notebook. [2]The *utilization* of every atom of (the child's) natural energy' Dr. Theodate L. Smith, *The Montessori System*.

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leading it on—giving it just as much as it could manage and no more, till more and more of the child was being taken up into the business. Above all, she was suggesting that the child ought to be busy.

(To say that Montessori leaves a child free from suggestion is nonsense. The whole atmosphere of a Montessori classroom suggests an ideal of ' being busy,' and Dr. Montessori herself is not above direct suggestion of the crudest and most dangerous sort. I know of only one intelligent educationalist who could put the equivalent of *Mi volete bene?* on a school blackboard, and he would do it only to provoke an outburst of ' No's.')

Perhaps, even then, the life outside the classroom might have diluted to a mutual advantage the influence within it, but not so completely as would be possible in a ' Class *c* ' school. There the classroom interests a child so little that he can hardly form his standards from within it. He forgets or reacts. But with the coming of the Montessori, or otherwise ' enlightened ' boarding school practically the whole of a child's energy is organised educationally. The handwork specialist comes into her own. The child is set to create. He weaves, plays organised games, makes pots, models the moon (peccavi!), dances, does sums by the Montessori apparatus, above all is ' interested ' all the time. It is hard to realise, perhaps, the complete artificiality or the pervasiveness of a world in which everyone is ' interested ' or producing something the whole time, unless one works in it. Laying aside its effects on the children, the cultural conception behind it is badly distorted.[1]

Psychologically it may be due to sublimation on the part of unmarried women teachers, or to any other cause; culturally, the fact remains: it is the educationalists' conception of culture that is wrong. Without being unduly cynical, we need not be surprised. Culture is becoming more and more the concern of the few—there are too many ' enlightened ' schools. The parents or teachers who believe in the artificial educational world of constant creative activity, stimulation, ' intelligent interest,' idealism itself are those who aesthetically contribute to the conceptions of ' beauty ' of

[1]It would be worth while to investigate the culture of a decade that produced Ford and Montessori. Their likenesses seem to me more essential than their differences.

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'style'; who appreciate the precious and reminiscent in literature—a fact reflected too often in the handwork, art and music of these schools, which retain all these misconceptions. (This is particularly the fault of P.N.E.U. schools, if one is to judge from their publications.) It does not indeed need much knowledge of actual conditions to sustantiate the suspicion that what the educationalist thinks he is doing bears little relation to cultural reality.

What seems to me more important is our first suspicion—that the 'enlightened' educationalists have very little idea of what they are really doing. This may concern the educationalist more directly than the man with critical standards in view, but he cannot afford to neglect it.

I will begin with a concrete, though perhaps particularized example. I was at school at a somewhat conventional prep. school, where boys from 9 - 13 were allowed three afternoons free a week—Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2 - 4.30, Sundays 1.30 - 5. I certainly cannot remember any boy abusing, except trivially, this free-time. They went for walks, played cards or billiards, stuck in stamps, did anything or everything. Where I am now teaching, at an 'advanced' school, we dare not leave the children an hour alone.[1] If we do so, they destroy something, or fight. The children are constantly (not only in their play) restless and listless at the same time, and this with few exceptions (invariably at present children born abroad and caught late into the system). The cause as I see it is two-fold:

(i) They have in reality as much or more against which to react than in a strict school—a constant moral or idealistic suggestion, probably not directly realized.

(ii) They are 'played out' nervously or emotionally; consequently have less nervous power to react. So much energy has been taken up into their work that they are in a highly 'nervous' (i.e. devitalised) condition.

The two may appear contradictory—perhaps I may say that my use of the word 'energy' is suspect. Of course it needs

[1]A child in a prep. school is left much more 'alone' than in an advanced school. He may be subject to strict laws, but supervision out of school hours remains mercifully inadequate.

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' energy ' of a sort to be destructive—a physically exhausted person cannot be violent. I have found it necessary to use the term to denote what I might otherwise call the ' cultural potential,' that is, the nervous and emotional ' fund ' of the child. The assumption of the existence of some such basic vitality seems to me necessary. I would refer the reader for a parallel to the philosophy of Lao Tze (*The Secret of the Golden Flower,* trans. Wilhelm, notes by Jung). The point in question is the ' outward flowing ' and ' backward flowing ' methods: the contention that too much creative action leaves the ' soul ' wasted, so that at death it becomes ' kuei,' a daemon or unsubstantial ghost.

I have taken perhaps an extreme example. It happens to be one that concerns me at present. Essentially however I think my case to be fair—that the ' enlightened ' education of to-day is producing children brought up in a world of false values, and that in absorbing his energies to this end his teachers are ' expressing ' him rather than letting him express himself. The same objection exists in relation to any method carried far enough of 'interesting' a child—teaching by the ' play-way,' etcetera. It arises from a failure to understand amongst much else the meaning of play: above all, to say that the children are expressing themselves in doing four hours a day of handwork (if we count model-making for didactive purposes as handwork) is not true—unless we care to be pedantically honest about ' express.'

It is perhaps worth while, when a conclusion is reached, to reset it in different terms. I do not for a moment pretend that Montessori's work is valueless: I argue it to be insufficient to tackle cultural problems, dangerous because it has arrogated to itself control of a child's cultural and emotional existence. The cultural ideal of the enlightened educationalist is that of the 'escape' poet (*cf.* the world of Morris' *News from Nowhere*); this means a denial not only of the actual world but of the emotions connected with it. (It is something of a shock to realise that an ' enlightened ' sex education is often the result of a refusal to recognize the importance or indeed existence of sexual impulses in children.) The cultural problem re-sets itself to the educator as an emotional one. That this is possible should be clear by inference to any reader of D. H. Lawrence, where the emotional problem is seen to be indissoluble from the artistic.

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I very much doubt the possibility or the wisdom of a direct cultural education.[1] Despite Montessori, children are not civilized beings. The responsibility for culture lies, as far as educators are concerned, with those who are trying to deal intelligently with the problem of clarifying and organising the emotions.

The majority of so-called psychologists or psycho-analysts must be ruled out. They are wholly uncritical[2] towards their own conclusions, they deal largely with definite neuroses that need little subtlety in analysis. For most of these Adler, Freud or Jung has prescribed a rule of thumb. It is as easy, it must be remembered, to be derivative in psychology as it is in poetry—and just as ineffectual. That is why I have italicized the word 'serious' in my initial classification—those *seriously* concerned with cultural or psychological problems.

It is not my place here to discuss in detail the work of the two men who seem to me to fulfil in some measure this requirement—Homer Lane and A. S. Neill. Lane dealt largely with delinquent children, and Neill has also dealt with these. Also he writes badly, so that it is difficult for the public to realise the subtlety or the significance of his work. I do not for a moment suggest that Neill's work is in any way a solution of the cultural problem, nor that it is not largely remedial. But it is difficult to see from whom else the education of the next twenty years shall derive if culture is to remain a reality. Certainly, and this is my main theme, it has little chance by way of 'enlightened' methods.

ALAN KEITH-LUCAS.

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[1]This was being done however with some success, but under exceptionally favourable circumstances, by J. N. Wales at Dartington Hall two or three years ago. The school is now in other hands. [2]To trace a neurosis to a single incident is often considered sufficient, whereas it does not need much perspicacity to realise that the exaggerated importance of this incident can only be due to an emotional state already existent.

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THE CHINESE RENAISSANCE

THERE are not many parallels to be drawn between China's Renaissance and our own. In one obvious respect the two are sheer opposites: China is not now restoring contact with a past phase of her tradition, she is deliberately breaking away from it. Here, for example, is a description of the attitude taken up towards Confucius, Mencius, and their followers by the creator of the Chinese Revolution, Dr. Sun Yat Sen (died 1925), whose portrait now looks down on every school room or University Auditorium and whose influence still dominates the political ideology of China.

> 'He was not in the habit of picking up the doctrine of any great author for discussion. Perhaps their power over him was mainly negative, in affording a ground for his attack on the existing social order, although he showed a great respect for these thinkers of his native land. His work was to overthrow the then existing Government, and he found no support from the philosophers whose views had been adopted to support a regime that he intended to overthrow. To popularise the work of revolution he needed to have an intellectual basis. It is evident that this new intellectual basis of his must go contrariwise to the old. As we know, he was a revolutionist in thought as well as in action.'[1]

Two points which appear clearly in this extract must be kept in sight if what is happening is to be understood. The intellectual movement in Modern China is primarily a consequence of the political movement. The traditional Chinese outlook is being remade—not because it was felt to be unsatisfactory in *itself* but because it plainly put China at a disadvantage in

[1] *The History of the Kuomintang,* by T. C. Woo.

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the world-struggle. In itself, it is probably—to those brought up in it—the most satisfying that has been developed in the world. Its historic stability is almost a proof of this, but to the new generation it has already ceased to be satisfying. The second point to which my quotation witnesses is the extraordinary candour with which the pragmatism of the movement is confessed. A Western reader considering the last few sentences may have a queer sense that the unwritten rules which govern decency in our dealings with philosophical principles are broken. The intellectual game known as The Pursuit of Truth is being given away. If he feels this he will be tasting one of the fundamental differences between the Chinese and the Western traditions.

Pragmatism, the doctrine that ideas are tools to be judged by the work they do, we have of course in the West—but with us it is a fairly modern opinion, a result of reflection and a result still treated in most European schools of philosophy as a heresy to be refuted. Chinese philosophy, in its main stream at least, seems to have been very little concerned with the Problem of Truth 'as such.' Reflection has not exercised itself on the question 'What do we mean when we say that a statement is true?' The place of the problem has been taken by an assumption, so initial as to be unformulated, that what is true is what had better be accepted. (Perhaps this is why the Western philosophy which has hitherto had most influence and been most helpful in China is John Dewey's Instrumentalism). The purposes of Chinese philosophy have been different from ours, and therefore the problems and the forms of argument and the structure of ideas have been different. The methods of comparing, defining, analysing and uniting notions, which we know in the West as Logic (whose physical application is Science) gained no permanent footing in the Chinese tradition. They developed instead another kind of subtlety, to which we are not ready yet to give the right kind of attention.

Naturally such a difference as this makes the translation of Western ideas into Chinese terms, and the introduction of Western methods into Chinese practice, an extraordinarily difficult undertaking. And the difficulty is immensely increased by the linguistic obstacle. The Chinese Classical language (only acquired fully by those who have been through an elaborate education which

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is already becoming rare) is, through its aptness for its own purposes, a most embarrassing medium for Western thinking. Often an impossible medium, in fact. The first great translator, Yen Fu, who gave China versions of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics,* Spencer's *Sociology,* Mill's *Logic* and *On Liberty,* Jevon's *Elementary Lessons in Logic,*[1] Montesquieu's *l'Esprit des Lois,* and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations,* used a modified form of Classical Chinese, going back to the earliest language available, because, as he says, ' refined theories are better explained in the language before the Ch'in and Han Dynasties than in the literary language of to-day, which has a tendency to adapt the meaning to a certain stereotyped phraseology.' But this device is, I think, generally regarded to-day as inadequate.

The alternative is to use the colloquial, the new literary language of China, the *pei hua* whose relation to the classical language, *wen li,* is always so mysterious to us in the West. Perhaps we can come nearest to understanding the relation by comparing *wen li* to the language of the Authorised Version of the Bible and *pei hua* to our current spoken idiom. Always remembering that each word in *wen li* is essentially a *character,* which cannot be spelt out but must be known, a character whose sound is by itself not a sufficient clue to its meaning, since the same sound will belong to many characters. *Pei hua* on the other

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[1]Yen Fu's choice of Mill and Jevons shows that the Chinese were quick to recognise the importance to them of our logic. And Hu Shih—the chief guiding spirit of modern intellectual China—chose for his Doctoral Thesis at Columbia *The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China,* a work whose aim was to find in Ancient Chinese thought a stock with which Western logical method could be organically linked. His *History of Chinese Philosophy* (in Chinese), which followed, was received with an enthusiasm that showed how widely the problem was felt. The first volume sold 16,000 copies in the course of two years. Since then the critical work, to which many have contributed, on the early texts has made this age remarkable even in the annals of Chinese scholarship. But two strains of such diverse conditioning as Chinese and Western thought are not easy to unite.

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hand is essentially a spoken language, though it is written also in characters a large part of which are the same as those used in *wen li*. As a language it has a more explicit articulation, a syntax more nearly equivalent to Western languages and a much greater facility in borrowing alien forms.

These considerations and the overwhelming advantage that the colloquial is spoken and read by millions, while *wen li* is known only to thousands and will soon be known only to hundreds, have made the creation of a *pei hua* colloquial literature the great effort of the last decade. In fact the phrase, ' the Chinese Renaissance,' is closely associated with this undertaking.

The pioneers in this movement have often compared it with the transformations that occurred in Western languages with Dante, Chaucer and Luther. But we should realise that the task for Chinese is more difficult and needs more conscious direction. The history of their vernacular literature is interesting. There had been great vernacular novels *(The Dream of the Red Chamber)* in the eighteenth century, enormously influential romances *(The Three Kingdoms)* earlier, and some colloquial verse. But these were frowned upon officially by scholarship, placed outside the pale of literature. So long as the Examination System with its stress upon a very rigid type of literary composition remained the only gate to influence, this could hardly be otherwise. In 1776, for example, the eminent critic Yao Nai enumerates thirteen types of literature (Essays, Forewords and Appendices, Memorials to the Emperor, Letters, Farewells, Decrees from the Emperor, Biographies, Epitaphs, Epigrams, Verses, Funeral eulogies, and Histories). Novels and drama are not mentioned. The Examination System went in 1904. Already by 1916 the creation of a vernacular literature had been urged—among others by Hu Shih[1]—but the real impetus to the movement came only in 1919 with a political incident.

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[1]Hu Shih needs to be mentioned in connection with nearly every aspect of the Chinese Renaissance. His eight ' nots ' became the formula of the new vernacular style. Three of these read as follows:—*Not* to avoid vulgar words and expressions; *not* to use classical allusions; *not* to use hackneyed literary expressions without real emotion behind them. It is to be wished that our own

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Modern China is very largely a students' creation—which should win it a special sympathy in the Universities of the world. In the peace settlement of 1919, the Japanese through the secret treaties with England and France which were their price for naval assistance, had gained at Versailles the former German settlement of Tsingtau. The news, reaching Peking, stirred the students of the Peking National University to an organised attack upon the pro-Japanese Ministry in power. When the betrayers fled all China applauded the students. A moment came of intense national consciousness and of angry criticism for the weaknesses of the old tradition. And with it the movement to create a new instrument for the national spirit in a vernacular literature triumphed. By next year a Dictionary of National Phonetics had been launched and *pei hua* was officially adopted in the primary schools as the National Language. A tendency—to look backwards instead of forwards—twenty one hundred years old had been reversed.

In the excitement of the new awakening, a crop of journals, political, literary, philosophic, came out. The best known was the monthly, *The New Youth,* which in the past had advocated radical reforms and had been the organ of the *pei hua* movement. It now became intimately associated with the Peking National University which, under a great Chancellor, took its place as China's premier University. The monthly had, as its editors and contributors, an extraordinarily able group of university lecturers. Another magazine, coming from the student body of the university, bore the significant title *The Renaissance*—its Chinese name, literally translated, means *The New Tide*. These journals did much to encourage vernacular poetry and the introduction of Western Literature into the vernacular.

With the use of *pei hua* the technique of translation changed. Formerly a translator, to command respect, had to be before

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renaissance had had an equally influential and sagacious mentor in its early days. Later when vernacular poetry seemed slow in starting Hu Shih gallantly stepped into the breach with a volume of ' Experiments.' To-day he is directing a corps of translators whose programme includes a complete Shakespeare and the whole of Gibbon.

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everything a master of the classical style. The famous Lin Shu is the outstanding example. Unacquainted himself with Western Literature or with any foreign language, he yet translated more than a hundred novels from several languages. An assistant sitting at his elbow would give him a rough version which he would render into classical Chinese. With a well matched pair of workers the method might have its advantages. Lin Shu's versions were often uncannily successful, capturing the spirit of the original much better than mere literal renderings. But he was often misled, sometimes far afield, by the incompetence of his assistants and his own literary exigencies. So Rider Haggard and Conan Doyle came to be placed by his prefaces among the best representatives of Western letters. But now clear and literal translation became a chief aim—partly as a means of testing and exhibiting the power of colloquial. Chou Tso-Jen, a professor of Western Literature in the Peking National University shows the change clearly. Formerly an able translator in the classical style, he gave up the Lin Shu tradition and carried literalism so far that his translations are sometimes unintelligible to the Chinese without previous knowledge of the language of the original. And not only the style but the matters translated changed significantly. In place of Lin Shu's *La Dame aux Camelias* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* came Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Ibsen, Strindberg, Hans Anderson, and took the new generation by storm.

Meanwhile creative writing struck out in new paths also. Before long an important writer of short stories, Lu Shün, had appeared. His *True Story of Ah Q* (translated into English and available until the Commercial Press was bombed in Shanghai this year) treats the lowest, most helpless, type of coolie with a bitter unsentimental discernment that we could do with in modern English writing. He has Russian influences behind him—an influence that has not been very happy, so far, with us.

In recent years, the movement—no longer called the Renaissance—has taken a new direction. A section of the educated youth of China, less numerous perhaps than important, is now Communist in general outlook, and a group of ' proletarian ' writers has appeared. Lu Shün, at first an opponent, has become its most important adherent. It is said that he was first moved

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to help in creating a vernacular literature through seeing in Japan a motion-picture of a Chinese, caught in the Russo-Japanese War, about to be beheaded. These writers, though they differ in the degree of explicitness of their propaganda, show a tendency which is sufficiently indicated in their title. Some undertook translations—Bukharin's *Historical Materialism* has four or five versions in Chinese. But since Russian is a language known to few at present, the usual way was *via* Japanese, with the natural defects of second-hand renderings. Great numbers of Chinese, until recently, went to Japan for their advanced studies. These translations, being more propagandist than literary in their purpose, are often slovenly. Few English writings are available, so Upton Sinclair became an idol. Most of his books have been translated—*The Jungle* exists in several translations—and a critical biography was compiled before he himself published his *Candid Memories*. Some of the group have written novels and short stories. Some turned critics to wage word-battles with the ' bourgeois ' authors and the literary ' gentlemen of leisure '—chiefly with the *Crescent Moon* group, contributors to the Shanghai periodical of that name, among whom Hu Shih and the late Hsu Tze-mou are the best-known writers. There is irony in the fact that the man who condemned *wen li* as the language of the aristocracy, the cultured few, should now be reproached for his aristocratic tone and bourgeois ideology. Time, once it moves, moves fast in the immovable East.

Among these ' proletarian ' authors is the gifted Kuo Moh Ju who was earlier the translator of Goethe. *The Sorrows of Werther* (in vernacular and said ' to read like German rather than Chinese ') went to ten editions in its first year. We shall not understand the vogue which extreme romanticism has at present in China unless we realise that the feelings which thus expand have been drastically shut down all through Chinese cultural history. The shock with which our Western love literature strikes the Chinese student has to be seen to be believed. In his tradition, sex and sentiment have been sharply separated—at least so far as official literature goes. Sentiment and the tender expansive emotions belong with friendship. Sex is an affair of appetite, pleasure, practical and family considerations and intrigue, and as such it has not been a literary interest. Hence

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the importance of the old vernacular subterranean novel literature *(The Dream of the Red Chamber)*. Hence too the official ban upon it as undignified, childish, debilitating or decadent.

This difference in the position of romantic passion in the orthodox codes of China and the Modern West is typical of the second chief barrier between us. The inner arrangement, the social standing and the incidence of the feelings is not the same in the two traditions. Much that has delighted us, and been approved as delightful, merely shocks them. Or *has* shocked them, rather, for they are coming to meet us very rapidly. The areas chosen by our cynicism and theirs have been different. This is partly, no doubt, a difference between social conventions, a matter of details in the order of the virtues. Tess Durbeyfield, for example (in spite of a general liking for Hardy), often strikes them as a bad woman, deserving the punishment she gets, for she is plainly an unfilial daughter. (After all she seems to have appeared to many of her own generation over here in an equally unfavourable light.) But the difference may go deeper than this. Not only may similar feelings, for them and for us, be elicited by very dissimilar situations, but the very make-up of the more complex feelings is perhaps different. Their tradition seems to have combined the ingredients of certain sentiments otherwise than with us and *vice versa*. Of this the chief instance would be Love. The blendings of tenderness, protective feeling, affection, sympathy, worship, religious satisfaction, truth-seeking . . . . with sexual desire in various degrees of sublimation, which are expressed for us by poets as different as Dante and Shelley, have never I believe been formed in China—or, at the least, have never been given any comparable expression.

If so, the wave of influence, chiefly from our English Romantic poets,—Keats, Shelley and Byron—which is now foaming magnificently through the youth of China must be counted as the greatest of these poets' triumphs. It may well prove that passionate love is, with logical method, the best gift of the West to China. Naturally the adventures of these new passions have been varied. They are not yet altogether at home in these new bosoms. As our history shows, the conditions under which they can be healthful are delicate and instable. In China, at present, they run easily to Wertherism. Or alternatively, the passion,

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finding no nourishing social roots, turns into decadence. Ernest Dowson is a surprisingly important poet to many Chinese eyes. Proust also, and Katherine Mansfield have marked vogues, which seem to have more than fashion behind them. Tagore, for example, thanks partly to a visit he paid to China, but still more to the ease with which he could be imitated, had for a time a fashionable success which soon departed.

Naturally, the content of our poetry rather than its form has most influence. But a number of poets have succeeded in carrying our forms over into Chinese already. The obstacles seem less formidable than we should expect. I have listened to *Jabberwocky* in Chinese without any doubt as to its metrical identity. But the perpetrator of this *tour de force*, Y. R. Chao, a chief creator of the National Phonetic Transcription, is a linguistic wizard. He was the first man in the world to teach himself (with the aid of C. K. Odgen's reversed gramophone records) to talk backwards.

I pick out from among the poets of the New China, one whose connection with Cambridge gives him a special interest for us. Hsu Tze-mou's death last year in an airplane accident in Shantung was a loss to China (and we have to learn that this now means to the world also) which it is hard to accept. He came to Cambridge in 1921. Mr. Lowes Dickinson met him in London, where he was studying political science, and persuaded him to try King's. His impressions of Cambridge—as a place where you lay on the grass in the ' Backs ' while wise men came to talk to you and insensibly you became a poet—have given us an almost magical standing with many Chinese students. At Cambridge he experimented widely in translation. I remember him bursting in upon me very early one morning with the brisk exclamation ' Last night I translated Biographia Literaria! ' Returning to China he taught for some years in Peking and then in Shanghai, coming back in the Spring of 1931 to Peking as China Foundation Professor of English Literature at the National University. His return, with Hu Shih, seemed to restore Peking to its place as the chief centre of the new Culture. I remember the electrical effect of his appearance, straight off the train, upon a philosophical luncheon which had been going rather quietly. Everybody became at once twice as alive.

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In Cambridge (he had adopted in America the 'foreign name' C. Hamilton Hsu, for the convenience of Western acquaintances) he looked gaunt and worn. In China his face had filled out. He seemed younger (he was thirty-five) and with his remarkable pallor he was arrestingly good-looking. Energy and spirit showed in every movement. It was not hard to understand that he had become a figure in Chinese literature not without some resemblances to Byron. I have at hand only one translation from his poetry, which I owe to Li An-che, who tells me that it does not show him at his best or at his most characteristic.

In a rickshaw, in deep night, I am on my way home—a
ragged old man drags with great effort
Not a single star in the sky
Not a single light on the road
The little flame of the rickshaw's lamp
Faces the dust of the road—
Bump to the left, bump to the right,
Trudges the rickshaw-puller.

'Rickshaw-puller, I say, How can this road be so dark?'
'Quite so, Sir. This road is indeed dark!'
He pulls, pulls on, passing a street, passing a gate,
Around a corner, around a corner, all the same darkness
Not a single star in the sky
Not a single light on the road
The little flame of the rickshaw's lamp
Is darkened with the dust on the road—
Bump to the left, bump to the right,
Trudges the rickshaw-puller.

'Rickshaw-puller, I say, how can this road be so quiet?'
'Quite so, Sir. This road is indeed quiet!'
He pulls—closely along a wall, as long as the Great Wall[1]—

[1]Translator's note: This was probably the wall of the Royal City. As the Wall is torn down now, a contemporary poem has become a historical allusion. So quick are the changes of Peking.

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Passing a moat he turns into an endless, deserted, dark space.
Not a single star in the sky
Not a single light on the road
The little flame of the rickshaw's lamp
Waggles in the dust of the road—
Bump to the left, bump to the right,
Trudges the rickshaw-puller.

'Rickshaw-puller, I say, why is there nobody about on this road?'
'Really there is, Sir, only you can hardly see them!'
The marrow of my bones suddenly shivers with chill
Are those blue-wrapped things ghosts or men?
Sobbing and laughing seem to be heard
Oh, after all there are tombs all over the space!
Not a single star in the sky
Not a single light on the road
The little flame of the rickshaw's lamp
Twists in the dust on the road—
Bump to the left, bump to the right,
Trudges the rickshaw-puller.

'Ric-rickshaw-puller, I say! How can this trip be so long?'
'Really, Sir? This trip is indeed long!'
'But—you drag me back home—haven't you been astray?'
'Hardly know, sir! Who knows whether or not we have been astray?'

In a rickshaw, in deep night I am on my way home,
A group of unrecognizable ragged spirits drags with great effort;—
Not a single star in the sky
Not a single light on the road
Only the little flame of the rickshaw's lamp
Curls in the dust on the road—
Bump to the left, bump to the right,
Trudges the rickshaw-puller.

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Perhaps Pouskin's *troika* had something to do with this: perhaps too, it is only a Western reader who would make it as symbolic a vision of China's present as this comparison suggests. But it is proper that we should realise here that, however successfully the Chinese are rising to their new destiny, to them the struggle must often seem nightmare-like, heartbreaking and almost hopeless. From us—from the preoccupied, still too shortsighted, West—they have hitherto had little enough understanding or co-operation. We have not yet realised that the quality of the world-life that our children are to inherit depends quite as much upon the character of the new China as upon any other one factor we can think of. If we were wiser we would make incomparably greater efforts to see that the values we most believe in came to the Chinese as freely and by as good channels as we could devise. An enlightened policy would offer them, for example, a First Class young Shakespeare expert to relieve their translators of some of the philological burden. It would give to the wandering Chinese scholars the special care which their enormously important work deserves. It would deliberately collaborate with them in their task of assimilating what is best in Western culture and reshaping it to suit their needs as a part of the future world order. Only those who have had the opportunity of working with Chinese students know how great their powers and how needlessly entangling and frustrating their difficulties are. A new age is being created in this wedding of East and West. Those to whom history gives some faith in humanity will envy the Chinese the richness of the joint heritage which will be theirs.

I. A. RICHARDS.

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THE NEW BENTHAM

JEREMY Bentham died on June 6th, 1832. According to his wish, his body was preserved for the obscure purposes of science; but his ideas, quickly forgotten by his unappreciative countrymen, enjoyed a merely oblique, though extensive, survival in the views of the few men whom he influenced directly and in certain reforms and tendencies towards reform in the legal system of England. What was mortal survived; what was immortal was buried and forgotten. But now, one hundred years later, though there is no suggestion that this grotesque skeleton were better underground, there is more than one suggestion that what was so thoughtlessly buried might be unearthed. Indeed, this business of exhumation has already begun. It remains to be seen, however, whether what comes to the surface is merely a corpse—a spiritual corpse to be set beside the still unburied skeleton—or a regenerate Bentham, a man with a new life and a new meaning. Nobody gets out of his grave exactly as he was put in, but unless there is some phœnix quality in the mind of Bentham, unless he was buried alive by his contemporaries, mere exhumation will do neither him nor us any good. My business is, then, to consider this attempt to rehabilitate Jeremy Bentham, to consider the skill with which it is being performed, and to consider whether the result is something alive and with a meaning for present consciousness, or just one more of these embalmed corpses with too many of which the world is already cumbered.

But first let us consider for a moment the Bentham who was buried, the old, unregenerate Bentham. At his death, to those who did not know him and to many who did, Bentham was, I suppose, little more than a figure of fun; an eccentric old gentleman who wrote much and published little. But to his intimates, to the ' School ' which in later years he gathered round himself, he was a master, ' the great critical thinker of his age and country.' And by many others he was recognised as a figure of importance in the history of their time. Moreover, among those who have

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left us their thoughts on the subject, there seems to have been a considerable agreement with regard to the character of his genius. By his friends he was known as a man of acute feeling; an affectionate man, extraordinarily sensitive to the pleasure and pain of others, 'passionately fond of flowers' and with a peculiar sympathy for animals. He was a man overflowing with benevolence towards the human race; the hero of Fénelon come to life. Further, it was recognised that, as far as his intellectual activity was concerned, 'the field of practical abuses' was his field. His genius, as he says himself, was for legislation. Bentham 'combined what had not yet been done, the spirit of the Philanthropic with that of the Practical. He did not declaim about abuses; he went at once to their root; he did not idly penetrate the sophistries of Corruption; he smote Corruption herself. He was the very Theseus of legislative reform—he not only pierced the Labyrinth—he destroyed the Monster.' And the great benefit which he conferred upon his age and country lay in 'the example which he set of treating law as no peculiar mystery, but a simple piece of practical business, wherein means were to be adapted to ends, as in any other of the arts of life.' He was 'the man who found Jurisprudence a gibberish and left it a science.' And he achieved this end because he combined with a considerable knowledge of English law a considerable contempt for its precedents, its prejudices and its irrationality. But Bentham was not, for his contemporaries, merely a reformer of the law and of jurisprudence; he was 'the great critical thinker of his age and country': and the lesson of his life was 'to show that speculative philosophy, which to the superficial appears a thing so remote from the business of life and the outward interests of men, is in reality the thing on earth which most influences them.' Bentham not only reformed the law so that (as Dicey says) 'the history of legal reform in England in the nineteenth century is the story of the shadow cast by one man, Bentham,' but he 'introduced for the first time precision of thought into moral and political philosophy.' And finally, according to the view which has been repeated by every writer on Bentham since Mill's astonishing essay appeared in 1838, 'it was not his *opinions* but his *method*, that constituted the novelty and the value of what he did.' Bentham founded not a doctrine but a method;

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the ' method of detail,' ' of testing wholes by separating them into their parts,' the method of ' exhaustive classification.' He was primarily and predominantly a master of detailed analysis, the inventor of a method of thought destined to revolutionize every department of intellectual interest.

But the defects, no less than the merits, of Bentham's genius were recognised by his contemporaries. Mill, who at the age of fifteen ' embraced Benthamism as a religion,' later conceived some doubts about the competence of his master's philosophy to explain all things in heaven and earth. And particularly, Bentham's genius appeared to suffer from the fact that his life was ' secluded in a peculiar degree, by circumstances and character, from the business and intercourse of the world.' In English philosophy it had become (and to some extent still remains) a tradition to separate experience from reflection, and Mill saw Bentham as a master of reflection whose experience was peculiarly and fatally restricted. ' He had neither internal experience, nor external; the quiet, even tenor of his life, and his healthiness of mind, conspired to exclude him from both.' And consequently ' he was not a great philosopher, but he was a great reformer in philosophy.' And besides this defect, others saw in Bentham a man who ' did not appear to have entered very deeply into the metaphysical grounds of his opinions,' a superficial thinker, a man ' who enumerates, classifies the facts, but does not account for them,' a man whose thinking stops short of the satisfaction of thought. It is true that to Mill Bentham was a man who ' always knew his own premises.' But on this point Mill seems to have been misled by Bentham's contempt for established authorities, particularly the acknowledged authorities of Jurisprudence, into thinking that his master was ' critical ' in a more profound sense. A hundred men are contemptuous of all the obvious and established authorities for one man who really begins to think for himself, for one who is an independent thinker; and Bentham certainly was not that one.

This, then, is the old Bentham, the traditional Bentham to whom all the old books (including the eleven volumes of the ' Collected Works ') introduce us. Other writers during the last thirty years have extended the picture. Some, like Leslie Stephen and M. Halévy, have shown us the connection between

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Bentham and his predecessors and contemporaries; others, like Professor Phillipson and Mr. Atkinson have given us a more detailed view of some special aspect of Bentham's work. But, in the main, what they have had to say has not seriously modified, though it has considerably extended, the story told by Mill and other of Bentham's contemporaries. But the new, regenerate Bentham, revealed to us in half-a-dozen recently published books, appears to differ radically from the old. We are given a new view of Bentham's life and character, and we are given a new view of the range and significance of his ideas. The real Bentham, we are told, did not live the restricted life of the legendary Bentham; and the real Bentham was a man of a far more universal genius than his contemporaries ever supposed. It is, however, impossible here to discuss this rehabilitation in all its aspects, and I have chosen instead to consider it as it is attempted in the work of two writers: Mr. C. W. Everett, of Columbia University, who besides editing one of Bentham's hitherto unpublished works, has given us a new view of the life and character of Bentham[1]; and Mr. C. K. Ogden, who has given us a new view of Bentham's ideas.[2]

A new biography may be new because it is based upon new discoveries or because it ventures upon a new interpretation of material already well-known. And it may be said at once that the novelty of Mr. Everett's work on the early life of Bentham depends in the main (though not entirely) upon certain discoveries he has made during the last three years while examining the voluminous collection of Bentham MSS. in the British Museum and in University College, London. He has undertaken, on the strength of these discoveries, to refute biographically the traditional view (derived from Mill) that Bentham was incomplete 'as a representative of universal human nature,' and to show us a Bentham less cut-off from the world, less untouched by hope and fear, desire and disappointment, than the old Bentham appeared to

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[1]C. W. Everett. *Bentham's Comments on the Commentaries*, edited with an Introduction (Oxford, 1928, 15/-). *The Education of Jeremy Bentham* (Columbia University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1931, 15/6d.). [2]C. K. Odgen, *Bentham's Theory of Legislation*, with an Introduction and Notes (Kegan Paul, 1931, 12/6d.).

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be. Not one of Bentham's English school, he remarks, had known him before the age of sixty; and this incomplete acquaintance with the early life and fortunes of their master led them to misconceive his character, to think him less experienced than he actually was. His early love for Mary Dunkly was unknown to them, they were imperfectly acquainted with his strained relations with his father, and his intimate and affectionate relations with his younger brother Samuel. They knew only a Bentham passionately devoted to the reform of the law: they were ignorant of Bentham the lover, the man of the world, the man of moods, of gaiety and melancholy, the man who had a disappointment to forget, and the man who had difficult questions of personal conduct to answer. And Mr. Everett has been able to show us this new Bentham directly and vividly in the hitherto unpublished letters to his brother Samuel. Henceforward, whatever defects may be found in Bentham's philosophy, it is no longer possible to account for them by referring to the ' secluded ' character of his life.

But this fresh account of Bentham's early life does not stop there, with a mere amplification of our knowledge of the facts, it ventures upon a new interpretation of the old material, the biographical material to be found in the last two volumes of Bentham's collected works. This interpretation is sometimes a little uncertain and indefinite, but so far as it goes it is admirably performed. We are given a picture of Bentham's early life and activities less encumbered than is usually the case with the detail of his later theories, his ethical, legal and political opinions. Indeed, this is perhaps the first biography of Bentham written by a man whose interest lies in biography rather than in law or philosophy; and from this, I think, it derives its great merits. The book is short, boldly conceived, simply planned and executed in a manner at once thorough and unpretentious. As a biography its only defect is, I think, a tendency to over-simplification: certain events in Bentham's life are singled out and made to appear more ' decisive ' than is the case in any man's life. Bentham's attendance at Blackstone's lectures, his friendship with Lord Shelburn, his meeting with Dumont at Lansdowne House—these no doubt were important events, but too much can be made of them as absolute ' turning-points.' In this, and in some other matters,

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Mr. Everett seems to me to have been insufficiently critical, to have relied too much upon the appearance of things. And this relatively uncritical attitude has resulted in a partial failure to formulate clearly and unambiguously, and to place in the foreground, the real point of the biography. And it has resulted also, I think, in an actual misunderstanding of certain aspects of Bentham's genius. For what, in effect, we are shown is not a Bentham who is a mere reformer of the law, a speculative thinker, a man whose work looks forward into the nineteenth century, an early democrat, but Bentham the *philosophe*, the creature of the eighteenth century, the native of France rather than of England, the companion in thought of Helvetius, Diderot, Voltaire and d'Alembert, the last of the believers in Benevolent Despotism. And, when this view is grasped firmly, when its implications are fully appreciated, not only is a new Bentham revealed, but the two 'major problems' of Bentham's life (which Mr. Everett states but solves only perfunctorily) are at once resolved;—Why was Bentham's genius recognised more fully on the Continent, in North and South America and in Russia, than in England? And why did Bentham write so much and publish so little? Indeed, they disappear as problems because they become what we should expect, and not what puzzles us.

Now, the character of the *philosophe* is both peculiar and interesting; and, taken as a whole, it is so foreign to the English character that it does not surprise us that Bentham was so little regarded in his own country and so greatly respected outside it, wherever this *philosophe* civilization had developed and established itself. There are, I suppose, three prime elements in this character, and all were highly developed in Bentham. First, an age of *philosophisme* implies a peculiar confidence in knowledge, indiscriminate knowledge; it implies an hydroptic thirst for information about the present world, its composition and its laws, and about human nature, its needs and desires. The *philosophe* believes in knowledge in a way which we find difficult to understand—we who have long ago lost this confidence. And he can exist only when there is a certain rude copiousness about the supply of knowledge which permits no suggestion of a limit. His is an inventive, ingenious, mildly perplexed and easily satisfied mind; there is vitality but no discrimination. All knowledge

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appears equally significant; and there is so much to be learned that there is neither time nor inclination to stay and learn anything profoundly. One thing leads to another before it has itself been exhausted; and when every suggestion is followed, it is impossible to follow one suggestion far. It is true that the world of knowledge, after a visitation of *philosophisme,* somewhat resembles a September orchard after a plague of wasps, but to the *philosophe* himself his life appears an endless intellectual adventure; he is entirely ignorant of the senseless depredation his lack of discrimination involves, and he is unconscious of his vulgarity. And, if he is fortunate, the disenchantment which, it would seem, must overtake such a way of living, can be avoided.

But secondly, besides this belief in encyclopædic knowledge, the *philosophe* is remarkable for his general credulity. He does does not know what it is to be perplexed; he only knows what it is to be ignorant. And he is protected from the dilemmas of doubt by a tough hide of self-confidence. Appearing to doubt everything and to be engaged upon the construction of a new world from the bottom up, he is really the most credulous of men. There is plenty of audacity and some courage in his thought, but little freedom and no candour. He does not, it is true, begin from the same place and with the same prejudices as his less enlightened contemporaries, nevertheless he begins with a whole miscellany of presuppositions which he has neither the time, the inclination nor the ability to examine. There is, in short, little or nothing in common between the *philosophe* and the philosopher. For the *philosophe* the world is divided between those who agree with him and ' fools '; ' science ' is contrasted with superstition, and superstition is identified with whatever is established, generally believed or merely felt.

And thirdly, besides his thirst for knowledge and his naïve cast of mind, the *philosophe* is a rationalist, in the restricted sense that he believes that what is made is better than what merely grows, that neatness is better than profusion and vitality. The genius of the *philosophe* is a genius for rationalization, for *making* life and the business of life rational rather than for *seeing* the reason for it, for inculcating precise order, no matter at what expense, rather than for apprehending the existence of a subtle order in what appears to be chaotic.

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There is, of course, much that is admirable in this type of mind; but it will be seen at once that its justification lies solely in the present appreciation of life and the world which it achieves, and not in any contribution to knowledge it has to offer to later generations. If it gives no present enjoyment to those who possess it, it is idle to look for other achievements. It can make no serious contribution to our store of knowledge; it denies the traditions of the past and attempts to fasten no new traditions on the future. What was important to the eighteenth century *philosophes* was not what they learned or discovered, not the knowledge they acquired, but merely the sense of life which the pursuit of knowledge engendered. And what is important to us is not the discoveries they made—these, for the most part, were negligible—but the general view of life by means of which they succeeded in making themselves at home in the world. The *philosophes* were the initiators of innumerable practical reforms, but in no direction did they achieve any real extension of knowledge; their minds were replete with half-conceived ideas. *Philosophisme,* that is, is a backwater so far as the main stream of European scholarship, philosophy and scientific research is concerned. The character of Voltaire's biblical criticism, for example, is entirely misconceived if it is considered as an attempt to make a serious contribution to the historical study of the Bible.

Now, the view I wish to suggest is that Bentham was, in all respects, a typical eighteenth century *philosophe,* and that for this reason his reputation was greater on the Continent than in England. And for this view Mr. Everett supplies much of the evidence we require. First, Bentham was moved by this peculiar, indiscriminate activity which belongs to *philosophisme,* and which accounts for his having completed so little of what he began. 'I am still persuaded, my dear Bentham,' writes George Wilson in 1787, 'that you have for some years been thowing away your time. . . . Your history, since I have known you, has been to be always running from a good scheme to a better. In the meantime, life passes away and nothing is completed.' Chemistry, the law, education, engineering, prison reform, psychology, economics—these were a few of the interests which served to supply material for his 'unnatural, unexampled appetite for innovation.' Never for a moment was his mind occupied with one thing to

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the exclusion of all others. And it is not surprising that, 'for the sake of expedition,' Bentham should desire '5 or 6 pupils who were initiated in my principles to whom I could give as many parts of my plan to execute under my eyes.' In his undergraduate days at Oxford the study of chemistry had much engaged Bentham's attention; and along with chemistry, of course, went astronomy. But for Bentham, as for more than one of his brother *philosophes* on the Continent, the science which appeared more important than any other was the science of government, for by means of this the whole human race was to be rescued from superstition. To create a science of politics, to apply the scientific method to the field of law, to unite law and science, to discover some means for measuring accurately political satisfactions—these were his ambitions. And in pursuit of this end, two things appeared to Bentham's *philosophe* mind to be necessary: first, a clean start; secondly, a code, something made, organized and definite, as distinct from what had merely grown. The clean start he found, or he imagined, in Russia; though of course he did not stay there long enough to achieve anything significant. Russia was virgin soil for the legislator; it appeared to be in the condition which the eighteenth century *philosophes* believed the human mind to be at birth, a *tabula rasa*. And secondly, the organization and rationalization of law implied in a code was what engaged Bentham's attention more nearly to the exclusion of other interests throughout the whole of his life. It was natural for a *philosophe* to hate the English common law and to be suspicious of judge-made law, for in both there is an element of uncertainty; on account of both English law can never be an artistic whole. But, in his contempt of the first, Bentham seems to have forgotten that law must change, that law is an expression of what is and not of what ought to be; he forgot, in short, what all the benevolent despots forgot. And his suspicion of the second was based upon a misconceived theory of knowledge. He appears to have believed that thought is always and expressly dominated by the circumstances of its generation, that there can be no thought independent of the psychological situation. The whole of every judgment, he believed, depends upon the psychical state of the individual who judges and derives from this its truth or falsehood. Such an opinion involves, of course, at once universal scepticism and

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self-contradiction; but Bentham was aware of neither of these implications. And in this matter, as in many others, he would have been on safer ground had he maintained his opinion as a mere prejudice instead of attempting to establish it as a principle. It is all very well to see Bentham's influence everywhere in the legislation of the nineteenth century, but when we consider how extreme his views about English law actually were, what must be noticed is, not the number of his isolated suggestions which have been put into practice, but the total rejection which his fundamental principles have suffered.

My view is, then, that the value of Mr. Everett's biography lies in what it suggests rather than in any specific interpretation of Bentham's life and mind which it offers. It suggests a Bentham different from the old, traditional Bentham, who was created by the liberal writers of the nineteenth century. In it Bentham is seen to belong to his century—the eighteenth century—and his environment. We are shown a living Bentham, a complete man, and not the mere thinker with which we have so long been obliged to content ourselves. And it remains to be seen whether, when this study is carried into Bentham's later life, yet another Bentham will appear. But, thus far, whatever his democratic sympathies, whatever specific modernity some of his suggestions show, what we have is Bentham the *philosophe*. And I venture to think that he remained a *philosophe* to the end.

It is now time to turn from this, to the other side of the attempt to rehabilitate Bentham; from Mr. Everett to Mr. Ogden. This new edition of the *Theory of Legislation* is a reprint, with a few verbal alterations, of Hildreth's translation (originally published in 1864) of parts of the three volumes prepared by Dumont from Bentham's half-French and half-English manuscripts and published in Paris in 1802 under the title of *Traités de législation Civile et Pénale, etc.* Hildreth's was not the first translation; an earlier was published in 1830. And it is not the most recent; Mr. C. M. Atkinson prepared a fresh, and on the whole better, translation with notes which was published in 1914. Setting aside, however the need for this reprint, what are important for us now are Mr. Ogden's *Introduction* and his *Notes*. For it is in these that the attempt is made to give a new range and significance to Bentham's ideas.

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The *Introduction* is divided into three parts. First there is a discussion of Bentham's genius and ideas generally, secondly a few pages on the *Theory of Legislation* itself, and thirdly, some consideration of the relations of Bentham and Dumont. And something of interest has been found to say on all these topics. I shall deal, however, only with the first. Nobody denies Bentham's importance in the history of English law and legislation and it would be difficult to exaggerate that importance; and the discussion of the Bentham-Dumont relationship is in the main of merely historical and biographical interest. What is important for us is the thesis which Mr. Ogden undertakes to defend in the first part. 'It is that Bentham's merits, in spite of his great and deserved influence on the nineteenth century, are only now coming to be fully realized; that with every decade after the centenary of his death (1932) the significance of his achievement will become more obvious; and that fifty years from to-day he will stand out as one of the greatest figures in European thought, along with Réamur, Leibnitz, Newton Malthus and Helmholtz. . . .

'The grounds for the view that the full recognition of Bentham's work is still to come are as follows:

1. His theory of Language and Linguistic Fictions.
2. His contribution to the problem of an International Language.
3. His insight into the Psychology of Value, in conformity with the most recent tendency of Criticism.
4. His proposals for the Codification of nearly every legal system in the world, and particularly the Constitutions of South America.
5. His services to International Law.
6. His work on the Foundations of Humanitarianism and Public Health.'

Now, it cannot be denied that this estimate of Bentham's genius and importance creates a considerable revolution in the current view. And the question for us is, how far can it be maintained?

With regard to Mr. Ogden's thesis, three general observations may be made. First, he somewhat naïvely remarks that 'of course any estimate of Bentham must depend to a large extent upon our interests and our general approach.' Thus, if we are interested

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in what interested Bentham, he will be important; if not, not. And since Mr. Ogden is most interested in the theory of language, this is the most important aspect of Bentham's work. Secondly, the criterion of importance which Mr. Ogden suggests is this: wherever in a writer who died a hundred years ago any ideas (however random, disconnected and undeveloped) appear which 'anticipate the modern view' of the matter, that writer is important. What makes a long-dead writer important are 'the echoes of modernity which reverberate through the fabric of his system.' And, whatever we may think of this criterion, since Bentham was a *philosophe,* a man with an inventive mind, a man of innumerable 'ideas' none of which he worked out fully, it is not difficult, if we adopt it, to represent him as 'a giant in the history of English thought.' Indeed, if these are our 'interests,' and this our 'general approach,' Bentham will have few competitors for the place of first importance; though if what we are after is modernity, I should have thought that, so far from being modern, at least one half of the grounds which are advanced to substantiate this claim on behalf of Bentham belong to the last century. And thirdly, Mr. Ogden everywhere asserts Bentham's importance, provides us with numerous quotations from present-day writers who also assert his importance, but nowhere is this importance actually shown and brought home to us. We are promised much, a bold thesis is proposed, but little or nothing is fulfilled.

The view is, then, that Bentham's chief interest lay, not in 'the law as it ought to be' (as Bentham himself seems to have thought) but in Orthology; and that his importance in the history of thought lies in his contribution, not to legal reform, but to the 'science of symbolism.' In this field Bentham was 'a century ahead of his times,' and he omitted to publish his writings on this subject merely because 'he had little hope of being understood.' But it must be said at once that considerably more and better evidence than Mr. Ogden offers us must be produced before this view can be established. That Bentham had this interest has always been known, and it was an interest he had in common with many of his contemporary *philosophes;* but unless we are to consult merely our own interests as the criterion of what is important and of what interested Bentham most, there seems

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no reason at all for not believing that the established view of Bentham as primarily interested in the law and as performing his most important services in that field, is not merely established but also true.

The notion of an International Language from which the irrationalities and complexities (and subtleties) of all existing languages should have been removed, is one which would naturally appeal to the *philosophe*. Whatever has merely grown is for that reason abhorrent to him. And it does not surprise us to find Bentham engaged, for a while, with this notion. But whether, on this account, he is to be considered ' one of the greatest figures in European thought ' appears to me doubtful, if not ridiculous.

And again, with regard to Bentham's psychology, all he has to offer us is one or two half-formulated doctrines developed for the purpose of jurisprudence. And the fact that there is to be found in Bentham's works a ' remarkable anticipation of the modern account of appetency ' will scarcely persuade us that he was a great psychologist. When we consider the state of flux in which the science of psychology is at the present time, the fact that in Bentham there are to be found, disconnected and undeveloped, some of the ideas which for one school of psychologists appear, for the moment, true, cannot be considered very significant or important. And, in any case, although Mr. Ogden loudly announces Bentham the great innovator in psychology, no evidence is produced to show that such a Bentham exists outside his eager imagination.

Bentham's services to International Law are neither extensive nor striking; and Mr. Ogden says nothing to alter this view. Indeed when we consider what Bentham might have done, having regard to the state in which international law then was and to the real character of Bentham's genius we are surprised that what he has to say is so commonplace and devoid of significance. Of the whole of Bentham's *Principles of International Law* (a very brief work), only the last part, *A Plan for an Universal Peace* (which has nothing to do with international law itself), is of the least interest to-day. No amount of rehabilitation will make Bentham rank as one of the great publicists of international law. And what has Mr. Ogden to say to the contrary? Merely that ' the very term *international* was his own creation.'

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But first, if it were, it would constitute no very staggering contribution; and secondly, does he suppose that Bentham had never heard of *jus inter gentes*? We shall be hearing next that Bentham is the greatest English theologian, on the strength of a couple of Voltarian anti-religious tracts.

Mr. Ogden's *Notes* are designed, for the most part, neither to elucidate Bentham's meaning, nor (like the notes in Mr. Atkinson's edition of the *Theory of Legislation*) to elucidate points of law and legal history, but to drive home the thesis of the *Introduction*, that is, ' to provide the student with references to the more important recent literature of the subject, partly in relation to psychology.' Thus, his first note is on the Principle of Utility, and the question proposed is, ' To what extent has the intervening century illuminated or invalidated (Bentham's) main position? ' But the writer of the note seems unaware of the magnitude of the question he undertakes to dispose of in half a page, and unaware also of the destructive criticism of the last century which the utilitarian moral theory has not managed to survive. He is satisfied with a reference to Sidgwick and to Dr. Broad and the remark that ' there the matter rests '—which, of course, it does not. Other notes approach Bentham's most casual remarks with a pathetic seriousness, as if everything he wrote were full of ' echoes of modernity.' When Bentham, with a charming eighteenth century carelessness, observes that ' the occupations of a savage after he has supplied himself with physical necessaries, the only ones he knows, are soon described,' the note directs us to the latest works on anthropology for ' the modern treatment of these subjects.' Some of these *Notes*, however, are more relevant, and the most useful are those which refer us to other passages in Bentham's works and those which elucidate some historical question.

In short, this attempt to represent Bentham as a greater Orthographist than psychologist, and as a more significant figure in both of these fields than in the field of law and jurisprudence, must be considered to have failed. It has failed because there is no evidence to support it and because it rests upon a false criterion of significance and upon the mere predilections of the writer who makes it. Bentham was an ingenious man, and if we look hard enough we shall certainly find in his works some

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'remarkable anticipations' of fairly modern views. But what of it? Does that make him a giant? A thinker like Bentham does not trouble to discriminate or confine himself; he skims the cream. He is not listened to in his own day because he is ahead of his time; but, when it is all over, he has nothing to hand on to his successors save a few random suggestions and a few inventions more ingenious than sound. And this, I think, is the character of Bentham's genius whenever it applied itself outside the law.

Bentham as a thinker belonged essentially to the eighteenth century, and this fact has been obscured by writers on Bentham because they are determined to direct their attention away from what Bentham actually thought and the eighteenth century presuppositions of his thought, towards the so-called after-effects or consequences of his thought. What has practical consequence is, almost always, the idea itself severed from the grounds and reasons which lie in the mind of the thinker, the mere *obiter dictum*. Cremation, contraception, co-education, this or that reform of the law, may be advocated for a hundred different reasons, and what is influential is, usually, the bare advocacy of the view. But when we come to consider what a man actually thought, it is not these bare ideas which are important, but the grounds and reasons for them which he believed to be cogent, the *ratio decidendi*. And in the case of Bentham, these grounds and reasons were all typical of eighteenth century thought, and nearly all fallacious. For Bentham, so far from having thought out his first principles, had never given them a moment's consideration. He had studied closely the work of Locke, Hume, Condillac and Helvetius. And while he was a thinker rather than a reader when it came to dealing with the law, he remained always a reader and not a thinker with regard to the philosophical first principles which lay behind. No man with so little interest in or aptitude for philosophy has ever taken so large a place in the history of philosophy as Bentham. It is safe to say that, so far as philosophy is concerned, there is nothing in the whole of Bentham's works which is original either in conception or exposition: both his ideas and the words and phrases in which he expresses them are derived almost entirely from the half-dozen philosophical writers whom he had studied. The principle of pleasure and pain comes from Helvetius, sympathy and antipathy from Hume, utility from any one of

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a dozen writers; his theory of knowledge is derived entirely from Locke and Hume; and wherever he ventures beyond what others had already thought out—as for example in his formulation of the principle of utility—he becomes at once confused and self-contradictory. Utilitarianism as Bentham left it is nothing more than a chaos of precise ideas. No man was ever more at the mercy of traditional doctrines in philosophy than Bentham. He belongs in these matters to the eighteenth century, and is an example of that not uncommon character in England—a man revolutionary in almost all practical matters, but dependent, unoriginal and cluttered up with prejudice in matters of speculation.

The principle of utility performed wonders in the reform of the law, or rather wonders were performed in its name, but this was possible only because the inherent fallacies which lie at the root of this principle were unappreciated or neglected. The principle, for the purpose of reform, was a mere *obiter dictum;* its *ratio decidendi* was ignored or forgotten. But if we wish to discover Bentham's quality as a thinker, we shall turn from these *obiter dicta* to their *rationes decidendi,* and we shall find these, for the most part, pointing us back into the eighteenth century, and moreover disfigured with the most naïve blunders.

And when we turn from his doctrines to his method, we find something admirably suited to Bentham's schemes for reforming the law, but (as a serious contribution to thought) something so naïve and childish that it is difficult to understand how it could ever have been selected as the finest product of the genius of any man who achieved so much as Bentham achieved in the way of practical reform. Bentham's method is based, of course, upon his view that ' in the whole human race, considered at all periods of its history, the knowledge of particulars has preceded that of generals.' But it is not the mere fact that Bentham was the simplest and most unconstrained nominalist in the history of English thought which is fatal to his reputation as a philosopher, but the fact that he assumed nominalism to be the only possible theory of knowledge, and was neither interested nor troubled to think about the matter.[1] His method is based throughout upon

[1]On this point Mr. Ogden has a characteristically wild remark. ' That such a man,' he says ' should be content to hand over

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presuppositions which he had never so much as considered. Analysis and synthesis, data and generalization, materials and conclusions, the bricks and the building—this was Bentham's crude and unconsidered conception of the character of knowledge. Thought, for him, as for most of the English philosophers at that time, was merely decaying sensation; and what could not be explained otherwise could always be accounted for by the principle of Association.

It appears, then, that Mill's estimate of Bentham's genius is, with certain reservations, more accurate than the view with which we are now presented. Mr. Everett has certainly proved to us that Bentham's life and character were somewhat different from what we had been led to suppose; thanks to him we are now in possession of a fuller knowledge of both than was at the disposal of Mill or any of the intimates of Bentham during his later years. But so far as the interpretation of his mind and genius goes, we have little advantage over Mill. And if it now appears that Mill was wrong in believing that this 'method' of Bentham's was so original and so significant, that he was wrong in thinking that Bentham's utilitarianism was good enough as a theory of law, though not sufficiently comprehensive as a theory

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his most profound and considered achievements without comment to posterity, is merely evidence that he had little hope of being understood by anyone who had lived but one contemporary life. Even fifty years later, we find Vaihinger delaying the publication of his work *The Philosophy of As-If* till 1911, on the ground that such an extension of nominalism would be ridiculed in official circles.' In the first place, there is no proof that Bentham delayed publication for the same reason as Vaihinger—that is mere conjecture. Secondly, it is stupid conjecture when we consider the extreme carelessness of Bentham with regard to the publication of any of his works: with Bentham it was not a policy so much as negligence. And thirdly, whereas when Vaihinger was writing the predominant fashion in philosophy was Idealism and a man might well wonder whether a nominalist theory would get a hearing, in Bentham's day in England nominalism was a fashion, a prejudice, a universal assumption. Bentham's nominalism so far from being revolutionary was merely insipid conventionalism.

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of morals, his *Essay* on Bentham still remains the best short account of the work and genius of his master. Bentham is a great and important figure in the history of English law, but there appears to me no doubt at all that if we follow the direction in which Mr. Ogden points, and look in Bentham for a man whose main interest and most important work was in Orthology, psychology, logic and philosophy, rather than in 'the law as it ought to be' and in jurisprudence, we shall end with an entirely false view of Bentham's genius.

Bentham's life and work abound in remarkable contrasts: a man without any real interest in speculative thought for its own sake, and yet a 'hermit'; a man who shrank from the world, the practice of the law and the compromises of politics, and yet one whose beneficial influence was felt entirely in these practical matters; a man who by force, cunning and ridicule killed many of the fallacies which dominated legal and political theory, yet one whose arguments were, in most cases, misconceived, and whose own thought was riddled with the most naïve fallacies; a man who spent his life talking about first principles, but who never once got beyond a consideration of what is secondary and dependent. The lesson of his life is not, as Mill thought, to show how speculative philosophy enters into and influences practical life, but to show that what in speculation is always the most influential in practical life is something half-thought out, something hazy, indefinite and confused. It is not the philosopher, the victim of thought, who influences our practical conduct of life, but the philosophaster, the *philosophe*. The significance of Bentham as a reformer of the law and as the first English writer on jurisprudence of any importance, is immense. But as a philosopher, as a thinker, he is negligible. 'It is the fashion of youth,' wrote Hegel, 'to dash about in abstractions: but the man who has learnt to know life steers clear of the abstract "either-or," and adheres to the concrete.' And Bentham (says Mill) was 'a boy to the end.'

MICHAEL OAKESHOTT.

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH CRITICISM?

A REPRESENTATIVE set[1] of books of contemporary criticism is at any rate an occasion for the inquiry proposed above. That literary criticism is not in a healthy state we all—readers of *Scrutiny*, or those, at least, in sympathy with the undertaking—assume; the undertaking explicitly affirms it. But perhaps we assume a consensus too easily: it is of the essence of the plight that the plight can be questioned. As of taste, so of criticism; we must expect to be assured with Olympian dispassionateness that it always has been in a bad state and always will be. Such dispassionateness is probably invincible. Yet that the argument should be found impressive represents one of the most desperate of the conditions that we have to deal with, and the challenge to cogency of statement should sometimes be taken up.

No one is going to assert that criticism was ever in a satisfactory state. Just what, then, is peculiarly, and so desperately, wrong to-day? Why all this fuss?

One may start, paradoxically, by asserting that this age will be remarkable in literary history for its achievement in criticism. The histories of literary criticism contain a great many names, but how many critics are there who have made any difference to one—improved one's apparatus, one's equipment, one's efficiency as a reader? At least two of them are of our time: Mr. Eliot and Mr. Richards; it is a very large proportion indeed of the total. Mr. Richards has immensely improved the instruments of analysis, and has consolidated and made generally accessible the contribution of Coleridge. Mr. Eliot has not only refined the conception and

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[1] *Poetry and the Criticism of Life*, H. W. Garrod. *Variety of Ways*, Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford, 5/-). *Criticism*, Desmond MacCarthy (Putnam, 7/6d.).

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the methods of criticism; he has put into currency decisive re-organizing and re-orientating ideas and valuations. The stimulus of these two very dissimilar forces has already made itself felt, and there is no reason to suppose that Mr. Empson's book will prove to be the only important critical work produced by their juniors.

But all this does not affect the conviction expressed in the second sentence of this essay. That this is so one might attempt to enforce by adducing Professor Garrod's *Poetry and the Criticism of Life*. Professor Garrod says of Coleridge: 'The appeal of his poetry is strong with me; and the appeal of the man. But just those qualities which make a critic he seems to me to lack.' And that disposes of Coleridge. It will be readily and rightly guessed that just those qualities which make a critic are what the rest of the book shows Professor Garrod to lack: yet it was respectfully reviewed by respected authority. But evidence of this kind is not to be seriously urged. There is long-established precedent for Professor Garrod and his reception, and his book does not really raise the important issues.

Nor does Mr. Bonamy Dobrée's *Variety of Ways*. One might set it over against Professor Garrod's book as showing that academic criticism is not necessarily unprofitable. Mr. Dobrée is not merely elegant, and such scholarly essays as his on Congreve perform a function, though his treatment of rhythm and style—indeed of all he handles—would have been more profitable if his scholarship and taste had been served by a better analytic equipment. But this is not the debate intended in the question, 'What's wrong with criticism?'; we cannot start from this text.

It is the third book, Mr. Desmond MacCarthy's, that really raises the issues. For Mr. MacCarthy is not a professor of poetry or a scholar or a specialist, but a professional critic, a journalist; in him criticism undertakes its essential function of keeping an educated body of taste and opinion alive to the age, of testing, nourishing and refining the currency of contemporary culture. And that there is still in some sense somewhere something like an educated body of taste and opinion the intelligence and limitations of Mr. MacCarthy's *Criticism* together show. For nowhere does it give evidence of any subtlety of first-hand judgment. In all the testing cases—in dealing with Donne and David

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Garnett, for instance—he is conventional and superficial. D. H. Lawrence he compares with Carlyle and T. S. Eliot with Browning, leaving the stress on the likeness; no one intelligently interested in either could have done that. Mr. MacCarthy, then, is not an original critic; he is the journalist-middleman of cultivated talk.

On this estimate he does at any rate testify to the existence of a certain cultivated *milieu* where there is an active interest in literature. But his significance for this inquiry lies in his distinction—for he is distinguished, if not quite in the way his reputation intends. In the serious pursuit of his function he enjoys something like a lonely eminence. Who else is there? In a healthy state we should have at least twenty journalist-critics of his quality, whereas if we look round we can see only the *confrérie* of the weeklies and the Sunday papers. The distinction so indicated, moreover, is one that the bulk of his readers cannot be counted on to appreciate to the full. Who, if not they, form the *élite* that follows the reviewing in 'our more elegant weeklies' (for the reviewing here, whatever may be the case with the accompaniment to the Sunday advertising, does appear to be taken seriously by such educated class as we have)?

Here, then, we have come to what is radically wrong with criticism. The public that makes any show of interest in literature is only a small minority, and though there may be behind Mr. MacCarthy a circle actively and intelligently interested, it is a tiny minority of a minority, which, for all the effect it has as representing generally operative standards, might as well not exist. And where there is no nucleus of an educated public representing such standards the function of criticism has fallen into abeyance, and no amount of improvement in the apparatus and technique will restore it. It becomes impossible even to get the plight recognized. My argument, for instance, (I lapse appropriately into the first person), will, except to those who find it obvious, seem for the most part an arbitrary tissue of arrogant dogmatisms.

It is more than the function of criticism that has fallen into abeyance. To those who take a serious interest in literature it must often seem as if their interest were curiously irrelevant to the modern world; curiously, because a serious interest in literature starts from the present and assumes that literature matters, in the first place at any rate, as the consciousness of the age. If a

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literary tradition does not keep itself alive here, in the present, not merely in new creation, but as a pervasive influence upon feeling, thought and standards of living (it is time we challenged the economist's use of this phrase), then it must be pronounced to be dying or dead. Indeed, it seems hardly likely that, when this kind of influence becomes negligible, creation will long persist. In any case, a consciousness maintained by an insulated minority and without effect upon the powers that rule the world has lost its function. And this describes well enough the existing state of affairs. To put it in more particular terms, no one interested in poetry can suppose that if all the serious poets now writing died within the year the newspapers would register any noticeable shock. The world is not interested; and this lack of interest must seem to those concerned about culture more frightening than hostility.

The world, it will be retorted, has something else to be interested in; those who see the desperate need for action, political and other, can have no concern to spare for the state of poetry and literary criticism. The need for political action few will be inclined to deny. But it seems pertinent to inquire the worth of political action or theory that is not directed towards realizing some idea of satisfactory living. I do not assert that traditional culture and literary tradition are identical, but their relation is such that those who are aware of it will not expect one to survive without the other; and it would seem romantic to expect that an adequate idea will issue out of amnesia—out of a divorce from the relevant experience of the race.

For some, of course, the problem is simple; inherited art and culture are bourgeois and must be replaced. Upon this philosophy I can hardly hope to make an impression, but I can hope, for most who are likely to read me, to have made clear the nature of my concern about the death of the literary tradition and the state of criticism—that is not a concern for the prestige of a minority as such.

The phrase 'minority culture' appears to have gained currency. What does not appear to be equally current is the realization that a genuine concern for 'minority culture' cannot be satisfaction with it. The more one cares about the values it preserves, the more clearly one realizes the function it represents,

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the less likely is one to be drawn towards the pleasures of Pharisaism.

There are, of course, the pleasures of pessimism, and they have no doubt been suspected of complicity in my assertion about the newspapers and the hypothetical death of all our poets. But the assertion was critically sober, and the stress judicial. For, as a matter of fact, the decay of the literary tradition is less conclusively manifested in the grosser absurdities of, say, the *Observer* (which after all are notorious) than in the more respectable absurdities of our most respected anthologies, with their scores of modern poets—Professor Lascelles Abercrombie recently presented a drove of forty. These anthologies are not, among Mr. MacCarthy's public (let us say), a byword for fatuity; they exhibit fairly the state of contemporary taste. The standards that, maintained in a living tradition, should have made them impossible have vanished, for the tradition has vanished, and the conventional respect for poetry of the cultivated remains, in general, purely conventional, uninformed by tradition—'traditional,' that is, in the bad sense.

Poetry, then, though it may still be examined on at school, has ceased to matter; it is taken, if at all, on authority. Where, on the other hand, the world takes interest, authority—the authority vested in tradition—has disappeared, as was foreseen by the late Sir Edmund Gosse forty years ago:

> 'One danger which I have long foreseen from the spread of democratic sentiment is that of the traditions of literary taste, the canons of literature, being reversed with success by a popular vote. Up to the present time, in all parts of the world, the masses of uneducated or semi-educated persons, who form the vast majority of the race, have been content to acknowledge their traditional supremacy. Of late there have seemed to me to be certain signs, especially in America, of a revolt of the mob against our literary masters. . . . If literature is to be judged by a plebiscite and if the plebs recognizes its powers, it will certainly by degrees cease to support reputations which give it no pleasure and which it cannot comprehend. The revolution against taste, once begun, will land us in irreparable chaos.'[1]

[1] *What is a Great Poet?* (1889), in *Questions at Issue*.

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Skimming through *The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse* one cannot help reflecting that he himself was a portent. He had, it appears, no qualification for authority except a belief in his right to it. This was sublime: 'You are a poet of a high order,' we find him writing to Mr. J. C. Squire, 'and a mind in curiously close sympathy with me. I feel myself singularly in tune with you. I understand exactly what you say. It is so rare. . . . You will make a great name!' (And there are elsewhere in the book appreciations of Mr. Squire that deserve to become anthology-pieces). His inability to see what is in front of him is sometimes almost incredible: he cultivates André Gide and finds Mr. E. M. Forster's *Howard's End,* that most maidenly, most transparently innocent, of books, 'sensational, dirty, and affected.' His critical incapacity, sometimes comic, was always complete. And yet his success was complete too; he imposed himself and became an institution, the embodiment of critical authority. It looks as if the absence of standards that I have been deploring is no new thing. Nevertheless there is an important difference between the age of Edmund Gosse and the age of Arnold Bennett. The standards in Gosse's time may not have been generally operative among the 'cultivated,' but respect for them was. Nothing else can explain his ascendency: he stood for the taste and learning that, being above the general level, made it possible for the common man to hope to improve himself. But a tradition that allows itself to be embodied in a Gosse is obviously in danger.

Civilization advanced. The triumph of 'democratic sentiment' that Gosse foresaw was brought about by forces that he does not appear to have noticed. Mass-production, standardization, levelling-down—these three terms convey succinctly, what has happened. Machine-technique has produced change in the ways of life at such a rate that there has been something like a breach of continuity; sanctions have decayed; and, in any case, the standards of mass-production (for mass-production conditions now govern the supply of literature) are not those of tradition. Instead of conventional respect for traditional standards we have the term 'high-brow'; indeed, such remains of critical standards as a desperate and scattered minority may now fight for can hardly be called traditional, for the tradition has dissolved: the centre—

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Arnold's ' centre of intelligent and urbane spirit,' which, in spite of his plaints, we can see by comparison to have existed in his day—has vanished. Instead we have the Book Society, Ltd., recommending ' worth-while ' books with the psychological resources of modern publicity, one of the most valuable of which is the term ' high-brow.'

It is, then, vain to hope that standards will somehow re-establish themselves in the higgling of the market; the machinery of civilization works unceasingly to obliterate the very memory of them. What then can be done? In despair one toys with desperate recourses: would it be of any use, before it is too late and oblivion sets in, to try to focus what remains of tradition in a ' central authority representing higher culture and sound judgment '—to try whether an organ can be found, capable of the function that Arnold assigned to academies ? ' Such an effort,' Arnold reminds us, ' to set up a recognised authority, imposing on us a high standard in matters of intellect and taste, has many enemies in human nature.' These enemies are now, to a degree that Arnold can hardly have foreseen, invested with power and conscious of virtue. Yet there are friends too—the need for such a standard is also in human nature—and perhaps the extremity of the case will rally them to the effort.

And then one remembers Sir Edmund Gosse: there we have the kind of mind that gets into academies. There is also the academic mind of the more respectable order represented by Professor Lascelles Abercrombie. Professor Abercrombie, writing on Literary Criticism in a recent *Outline of Modern Knowledge* (a production symptomatic of the times), devoted a third of his space to Aristotle and a proportionate amount to Longinus, and in his bibliography mentioned at least one bad and several insignificant books, but neither Mr. Richards nor Mr. Eliot. Still, the article is scholarly, and there might be something to be said for this kind of academic mind if only it could be brought into touch with what is alive.

Someone may by now have remembered that there is a Royal Society of Literature in being. Founded by George IV, it is already venerable: might not something be done to establish a recognized ' centre of intelligent and urbane spirit ' here? The Society is not notorious; no one, except its members, seems to

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know much about it. Readers of the *Times Literary Supplement*, however, will remember to have seen at intervals long and respectful reviews of certain volumes called *Essays by Divers Hands*. The hands are those of Fellows of the Royal Society of Literature.

If one hunts down the books in a library one has to brace oneself before dipping, they look so dull. Yet they do contain light reading. For instance, one may have the luck to take down the volume (1923) in which Mr. Alfred Noyes discourses on *Some Characteristics of Contemporary Literature*: 'In the current number of the *Quarterly Review* there is a review—an exceedingly able review—of a recently published novel, which, I say without hesitation, and without the slightest fear that anyone here who has seen it will disagree with me, is the foulest that ever found its way into print.' After the moralist the literary critic: 'The technical quality of the writing is beneath contempt.' Mr. Joyce is not even original; in realistic audacity he was forestalled by Tennyson in *Locksley Hall*. (Of *In Memoriam*, by the way, we are told: 'It is probably the greatest elegy in any language, not because this or that authority says so, but demonstrably.') We are not, then, surprised to find that Mr. Noyes stands for tradition, and does not mince his words: 'All over the English-speaking world this hunt'—represented, we gather, by Mr. Joyce and Mr. Eliot—'for an easier way in technique has been accompanied by a lowering of the standards in every direction. This quality of the thought and the emotion has been incredibly cheapened, and the absence of any fixed and central principles has led to an appalling lack of discrimination. Literary judgments in many cases have become purely arbitrary.' And Mr. Noyes indicates his fellow-Paladins: '. . . The desire to break the continuity of our tradition has been fought by Mr. Edmund Gosse with the weapon of an irony as delicate as that of Anatole France. Critics of a later generation like Mr. Clutton Brock, Mr. J. C. Squire, Mr. Robert Lynd have also steadily sought to maintain a just balance between the old and the new.'

Mr. Squire and Mr. Lynd, a defender of tradition in any serious sense would have to point out, have been among the most subtle and successful democratizers of standards. And it is comment enough on the academic conception of tradition—which is, of course,

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what Mr. Noyes stands for—to point to the company it keeps. In the Royal Society of Literature there is, for instance, Dean Inge, in whom, no doubt, in spite of the differing communions, Mr. Noyes finds a kindred spirit. Dean Inge, too, stands to the defence of technique against literary Bolshevism. He prescribes (1922) classical metres for English poetry: 'We want laws, or we shall lose all beauty of form.' On the other hand we remember, hardly with surprise, that Dean Inge has contributed his share to the advance of civilization—not without due recognition, we may hope: 'I cannot be too grateful for the generosity of the *Evening Standard*, . . . ' as he says in *More Lay Thoughts of a Dean*. He has asserted authority in multifarious provinces, and maintained standards, particularly in the matter of Christian gentility: 'He was no gentleman,' he says of Donne, 'and a very equivocal Christian. I have a rooted distrust of men of letters who, like Donne, Huysmans, and the African novelist, Apuleius, wallow in garbage for many years, and then suddenly "get religion." '

To-day journalism solicits us everywhere, and the academic conception of tradition, clearly, does not save its champions from wallowing. There are, of course, in the Royal Society of Literature more respectable representatives of the academic mind than Dean Inge, and the aristocratic tradition is also represented. So, since we are also told that it is the policy of the Society 'to focus its prestige' by 'adding to itself under a rigorous system of election a majority of the most distinguished writers of the time,' we can still be interested. We look anxiously to see who these writers are. Mr. Laurence Binyon is one, we must suppose. Mr. de la Mare is also of the Society. However, he cancels out against Mr. John Drinkwater, who is also there: any 'recognised authority' hoping to impose on us 'a high standard in matters of intellect and taste' must combat the confusion that lumps Mr. de la Mare and Mr. Drinkwater together as 'Georgian poets.' Mr. G. K. Chesterton is also a member, which, perhaps, may pass without comment one way or the other. But when we come to Mr. Hugh Walpole and Miss Clemence Dane we know that the worst is true and the hope was foolish. For Mr. Walpole and Miss Dane are two-fifths of the Book Society Ltd. (or, to be strict, of the Selection Committee) and Miss Dane wrote a book on 'the traditive novel' called *Tradition and Hugh Walpole*.

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There are other Fellows. There is Miss V. Sackville West, for instance, who, addressing the Society on *Some Tendencies of Modern English Poetry* (1927) contends that 'free verse' is a 'more civilized form' than the other kinds. But this can hardly tend to make Mr. Eliot feel more at home in the Society (for we find him to our astonishment a Fellow). Nor can his presence in such company tend to reverse our conclusion as to the influence of the Society on standards.

The Royal Society of Literature, we must conclude, has no function, unless the incidental one of hall-marking the kind of literature standardized by the Book Society, Ltd.

The English Association, which in our search for a likely organ we turn to next, can, on the other hand make out a very strong case for its existence. Its province is education, and its function, in brief, to organize throughout the country such interest in English literature as will admit of organization. But, in the absence of any serious current standards or any 'central authority representing higher culture and sound judgment,' what can it do, we ask, to supply the lack, or to resist the triumphant enemy? And we note with misgiving in the Bulletins of the Association the prominence of certain familiar names, the interlocking with the Royal Society of Literature. But we are not in a hurry to generalize, or to cast up the account, though we get many disquieting glimpses both of the educational work in the country at large and of proceedings at the top of the hierarchy. What Mr. Alfred Noyes is reported as saying to various branches might be adapted and applied to lectures and addresses sponsored by the Association: 'It was perfectly obvious, he said, that many people who wrote about poetry didn't know what they were writing about.' There are lectures on Mr. Walpole's and Mr. Priestley's novels, and even on Mr. Priestley's schooldays. And the healthy-minded dislike of intelligence voiced by Colonel John Buchan does come to have the effect of a corporate spirit: 'Again,' he says, championing the Victorians in an address called *The Novel and the Fairy Tale* (July, 1931), 'they were not clever people, like those who decry them, and in this they were akin to the ordinary man, who is nearly as suspicious of mere cleverness as Mr. Baldwin.' Still, some compromise, perhaps, there must be, and if culture is to enjoy the support of Good-Fellowship it must pay the price; the Good-Fellow ticket is inevitably the anti-highbrow.

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But after a glance through the current Bulletin (December, 1931) one's suspicion that the price may leave nothing worth keeping becomes something more than a suspicion. For Professor Oliver Elton, elected President for 1932, speaking at the Annual Dinner of the Association, with the Archbishop of Canterbury in the chair, is reported as having concluded: 'At any rate, whether we are saints or whether we are not saints, we shall all be the better for doing two things, reading the novels of Mr. Hugh Walpole and being members and supporters of the English Association.' Dr. Elton was not speaking without precedent: the *entente* between the English Association and the Book Society had already been well advertised. At the Annual Dinner a year before, Mr. Hugh Walpole, Chairman of Committee (succeeding Mr. J. C. Squire), had said with reference to Mr. J. B. Priestley (once of the Book Society) 'This is the point that I wish to make; that he has, particularly by a recent book of his which we all know, given a new dignity to the position of the "best seller." It is, I believe, a best seller, and it deserves to be. To call it a classic would be, of course, premature and perhaps exaggerated, but I think to say that it is a work of very high literary excellence and that it will live is not going too far.' Mr. Priestley, unfortunately, wasn't present to make the graceful reply, but the President of Magdalen, another fifth of the Selection Committee of the Book Society, Ltd., was, so that Mr. Walpole's 'eminence in letters and enthusiasm for literature' did not go unsignalized.

Is it necessary to inquire further? Looking over the reports of educational work in the country generally we can no longer doubt that it is largely a matter of propagating, and endorsing with the authority and prestige of the Association, the standards of the Book Society. If anyone still hesitates to concur, there is the field of poetry to consider, where, unhappily, we are left no excuse for suspending judgment. For the English Association is responsible for the anthology, very widely used in schools, called *Poems of To-day*, the two volumes of which (as I have heard indignant teachers who have to use it lament) contain between them hardly half-a-dozen good poems. The importance of *Poems of To-day* to the finances of the Association is referred to at most Annual General Meetings. At the Annual Dinner, 1926, Mr. Baldwin, as President-elect, said: 'We are solvent, we are con-

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siderably on the right side; but that is because we have been living on the earnings of *Poems of To-day*. We hope to follow it up with equally profitable publications.'—A concise statement of the position: there can be no pleasure in dwelling on the irony.

The worst suspicions aroused by the Royal Society of Literature, then, have been confirmed. There is nothing for it but to conclude that, in the absence of current standards maintained by the authority of tradition, official machinery can only gear in with the mechanism of standardization and levelling-down—can, at the best, only endorse Book Society values. The L.N.E.R. advertizes that it 'brings you to Priestley's England.' The English Association is helping to bring us all to the Book Society's England.

It is then, without extravagant hopes that we turn to the British Broadcasting Corporation, the new organ of culture of which so much is expected. It has been taking its function with admirable seriousness. Last winter's set of talks entitled *This Changing World* was a laudable attempt at educating the public to cope with the modern environment. And good educational work the B.B.C. has, in some sense, undoubtedly done. But how little it can be expected to reverse the process we have been contemplating, to educate in the sense of promulgating standards that would make the Walpole-Priestley *régime* appear what it is, Mr. Harold Nicolson's notorious talks on *The New Spirit in Literature* should have been sufficient to establish.

Mr. Nicolson's talks were notorious because of the disapproving comment they provoked, and its sequel. They were not notorious for their extravagant absurdity, their vulgarity and their sciolism; the objectors did not point out that Mr. Nicolson had obviously not the first qualification for the undertaking upon which he had embarked with such assurance. However, it might be urged that the mere undertaking was something; it was at least a challenge to Book Society values. That it was so Mr. Nicolson took pains to deny, and we have here the most significant aspect of the whole affair.

'I have,' he assured his listeners, 'a great respect for Mr. Hugh Walpole, who in more than one way has rendered valuable service to literature.'—(Mr. Nicolson was perhaps thinking of the Book Society and the English Association.)—'I admire his character and I have often admired his books.' The assurance was

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as explicit as possible. ' I have no doubt whatsoever regarding the literary integrity of Mr. Walpole and Mr. Priestley. And I like their smiles. I might even go further. I might admit that writers such as these two stand in a more direct relation to the continuity of British letters than do any of the authors whom I shall discuss in this series. I am perfectly prepared to believe that they represent a " better " school of writing than do my own poor neurotics.' (*Listener,* Nov. 4, 1931). So it is not, all things considered, surprising that Mr. Nicolson should go on to ask: ' What, then, is the gulf that separates Mr. Walpole and me in literary matters? '

What indeed? And we might still have asked, even if Mr. Nicolson had re-iterated disagreement instead of agreement. For debate at Mr. Walpole's level could have no place in a serious discussion of modern literature, and there could be no serious discussion of modern literature that should not be an implicit condemnation of Mr. Walpole and Mr. Priestley. Mr. Nicolson, in fact, even if he had been qualified to explain Mr. Eliot and Mr. Joyce and Mrs. Woolf, would have been better employed explaining how Mr. Walpole and Mr. Priestley are, ' in more than one way,' *not* rendering valuable services to literature.

This, of course, he could not have been allowed to do had he so desired. And that is really the final comment on the kind of undertaking he took part in. A serious experiment in cultural education would have to start by doing what is and must remain forbidden.—There *are* authorities that may not be challenged, but none of the kind we are looking for. And there can be none.

As for Mr. Nicolson's embarrassing performance over the wireless, we should remind ourselves that he wrote in *Some People* a book of a certain distinction and that his *Tennyson* and his *Swinburne* are not negligible. These books are the work of a cultivated man of some talent, and his case is the more interesting, and the more illustrative of the times. These are the times in which the acquiring of taste and discrimination and ' sensitiveness of intelligence, is probaby harder than ever before in the history of civilization. The *Listener,* in which Mr. Nicolson's talks were printed, reminds us—none the less for the good quality of much of its contents—of his real excuse. In the environment it represents, the tropical profusion of topics and vocabularies and the absence of a cultural grammar and syntax, what chance had he?

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Such an environment does not favour 'sensitiveness of intelligence,' which, as Arnold tells us, produces 'deference to a standard higher than one's own habitual standard.' And where is such a standard to be found? So a man may discuss 'matters of taste and intellect' with the best people, and never be troubled even by the ghost of authority. And, now himself authority, so far from being able to induce 'sensitiveness of intelligence' in his listeners, he is himself demoralized, and can tell them seriously that the 'modernists' (conforming to progressive evolution, and interpreting man's unconquerable mind) preach: 'Sex is a form of food; do not starve it, yet do not guzzle' (*Listener,* Nov. 25).

With no standards above, inherent in a living tradition that gives them authority, education can be only a matter of so much more machinery, geared to the general machine of civilization. I could produce the familiar evidence from the field of democratic adult education (lectures on Walpole and Priestley, etc.), but there has been much devoted work, and here, in any case, I would rather not risk being thought to take pleasure in irony.

Standards above, invested with effective authority—were there ever any? Were things ever much different? That such questions can be asked (as they commonly are) brings home the completeness of the change. There is no room here even to hint at the kind of evidence that can be marshalled. I can only reply that before the last century, in, say, Johnson's time, it never occurred to anyone to question that there were, in all things, standards above the level of the ordinary man. That this was so, and the advantage the ordinary man derived, might be brought home by a study (one is in fact being written) of the memoirs and autobiographies, which exist in considerable numbers, of persons of the humblest origin who raised themselves to intellectual distinction and culture. Johnson's own appeal to the 'common reader,' which is sometimes invoked in support of the democratic principle in criticism, has (odd that I should have to say it!) an opposite force. It testifies how far Johnson was from suspecting that there could ever be a state of affairs like that existing now. He could rejoice to concur with the 'common reader' because taste was then in the keeping of the educated who, sharing a homogeneous culture, maintained in tradition a surer taste than any that is merely individual can be, and he could not have

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imagined such an authority being seriously challenged. To-day, as the Editors of *Scrutiny* pointed out in their first editorial, there is no such common reader.

And yet there are some (most readers of *Scrutiny*, let us say) to whom the substance of this essay is commonplace, otherwise it would not have been worth writing: where there are some to whom it is commonplace there are some to whom the commonplace has not come home in all its force. This is to suggest that full recognition from those capable of it is worth striving for; and that implies more. It is certainly not to suggest any simple prescription. For if what Matthew Arnold, pondering the Literary Influence of Academies, said seventy years ago might still be said, it would be with a very different accent:

> 'It is not that there do not exist in England, as in France, a number of people perfectly well able to discern what is good, in these things, from what is bad; but they are isolated, they form no powerful body of opinion, they are not strong enough to set a standard. . . . Ignorance and charlatanism. . . are always trying to pass off their wares as excellent, and to cry down criticism as the voice of an insignificant, over-fastidious minority; they easily persuade the multitude that this is so when the minority is scattered about as it is here. . . .'

F. R. LEAVIS.

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EAGLES AND TRUMPETS FOR THE MIDDLE CLASSES

THERE is an interesting exception to the rule that in contemporary civilisation the poets are allowed a place of but little importance. No doubt, in general, they are sufficiently ignored. Even if (as is sometimes claimed for them) they express our life at its point of most conscious intensity, they are rarely disturbed in the privacy of their self-expression. And so far as any direct influence is concerned they are clearly less important in the community than their historical or mythical predecessors, the bards, the skalds and the prophets. These spoke with the voice both of God and of the People. Our modern poets normally make claim to no such authority. Yet there is one kind of national emergency in which even they have their moments. This comes usually during a reversion to a state of primitive excitement like that which gave the legendary bards their distinction, and it comes most often when a war is waged with some rival community.

When a modern nation goes to war, it experiences, during the early stages of the struggle, a species of folk-ecstasy, and it then feels a distinct need for some bard, prophet or poet laureate who will associate its new fury with the ancient heroics. This is the opportunity of the ' poet.' (I use the word, not to suggest any literary merit, but to denote a generally acknowledged office). If the poet experiences the new feeling at about the same level as his fellows and can express it with technical skill, he may suddenly find himself possessed of unexpected influence. This is especially true of modern wars, since these are won, more than ever before, not by the skill of the actual combatants, but by the preservation of the *morale* of the whole nation. It is in forming and maintaining this *morale* that the poet once more finds a national function. It may be interesting to look, from the social rather than the literary point of view, at the play of

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this tendency during the last hundred years or so of our history.

There has always been patriotic poetry, and even in the realms of autocrats it has been difficult to win wars without the generation of popular enthusiasm. But is it fanciful to discover a general difference between the patriotic rhetoric of earlier forms of society and that of democracy? Compare, for instance, the patriotic rhetoric of Shakespeare with that of the nineteenth century. The former is good swinging jingoism, expressed imaginatively; little more than a spirited poetic rendering of the well-known fact that one Englishman is as good as three Frenchmen. It may lend itself to super-patriots, but it is at least not apologetic: it is bombastic, but not priggish. But since the rise to economic and political dominance of the middle classes, there has been something over-moralised about our patriotism. Even Mr. Kipling, who passed with our fathers as so blatant an Imperialist, wrote *The Recessional,* a piece which would have been quite incomprehensible to the buccaneering Elizabethans, though now to a whole generation it has seemed the most edifying combination of patriotism and piety. If this is true even of what might be called Tory nationalism, how much more true is it of those nineteenth century nationalist movements that claimed to be Liberal. The whole complex of thought about popular nationalism between 1800 and 1920 was incurably idealistic.

During the nineteenth century the waging of wars became overlaid with an unhealthy self-righteousness everywhere redolent of a nation of shopkeepers getting special terms from the Deity. (Compare *Westward Ho!* with any genuine expression of the Elizabethan spirit). Feudalism, with its chivalry and its robber barons, had gone down before a society of mass production and respectable middle-class principles. But when wars were seen to be more than ever necessary, it was the poets who supplied the *bourgeoisie* with the eagles and the trumpets.

The new nationalist movements coincided, not accidentally, with the rise of 'Romanticism' in the literatures of Europe. In the cult of the national soul there was something essentially Romantic, and the re-discovery of national pasts was one of the distinctive features of the new literatures. Typical Englishmen of the preceding century, though they had upheld the virtues of the patriot, had tempered their zeal with something broad and

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Roman, and they were vigilant to discover the impostor under the guise of the too enthusiastic patriot (everybody knows Dr. Johnson's dictum on the subject). But to the young Wordsworth to be a 'patriot' was essentially to be an enthusiast and a revolutionary. He himself found in the French Revolution that spirit of liberal patriotism which he tried later to instil into his own countrymen.

In England the forces of Romanticism and of idealised Nationalism frequently converged during the nineteenth century. In the period of something over a hundred years that is behind us we have had two really first-class wars, that against Napoleon and that against Germany, with between them the very nearly first-class war in the Crimea. In each of these the forces of national idealism found their poet, Wordsworth in the Napoleonic War, Tennyson in the Crimean War and Rupert Brooke in the War of 1914-1918. Wordsworth was perhaps least accepted as 'official,' but although he was still an unorthodox poet he felt himself to be speaking for the nation, and the welcome given to his patriotic sonnets by critics who disliked his other work shows that he did so. Tennyson, of course, was the Poet Laureate. And Brooke spoke for 'Youth' and was admittedly representative. Each expressed for reading people the conviction that the war was no trivial or self-seeking quarrel, but a great crusade for Honour and Liberty. What they wrote, perhaps, does not read so happily now. Nevertheless it is not unreservedly bad poetry, and in spite of its incomplete integrity, one can feel something of noble sentiment in it. It is interesting to see how easily the loftiest of professions has lent itself to that which the Chinese (before the day of their Christian generals) considered the most degrading.

I.

It will be recalled that as a young man Wordsworth had been in revolutionary France and had propagated the new principles with ardour on his return to England. But, confronted with the disappointing development of the Revolution, and increasingly realising how uncongenial the life of a doctrinaire would be to him, he had withdrawn into himself. He made a severe break with his former mode of life, except in so far as a

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campaign for the democratisation of poetry afforded him some compensation for the abandonment of his enthusiasms. But before he sank into the comparative quiescence of his later years there was one more convulsion that stirred him deeply. This was the war with Napoleon. Under the stress of his public excitement Wordsworth forgot that he was a Solitary and spoke once more as a patriot.

He spoke not only with strong personal conviction, but with an apparent immediacy of inspiration that was not always his when he peered into the lives of dalesmen and peasants with whom, despite his assertions to the contrary, he was rarely in genuine and unselfconscious unison. His voice at first may have been a single one, but he felt rightly that it was the voice of growing numbers of people in England and in the newly awakening Europe. The war was against the France that had emerged from the Revolution, but Wordsworth's spirit in supporting it was very like that which had moved him when he had been a French 'patriot.' For a time after the declaration of war he had naturally been perplexed and at first had even wished success to his country's opponents. But as the Revolution merged into the Napoleonic adventure and France, no longer a liberalising influence, became an aggressive tyranny, Wordsworth saw with relief that his own country was on the side of the angels. It was indeed very ill-fitted for divine service, but Wordsworth hoped that if the call were sounded clearly enough there was a real chance that its spirit might be purified and its actions made glorious for the future of freedom.

This was the mood at least in which his campaign opened, soon after the resumption of fighting following the peace of Amiens. He by no means shirked criticism of his own country, but rather admitted it, endeavouring at the same time to breathe into his countrymen a more courageous and liberty-loving spirit. The evils of the Napoleonic system were in any case greater than the deficiencies of his own people. One may say with emphasis that Wordsworth did understand this importance of a nation's moral attitude to its own actions. He wanted his countrymen to feel what France had felt when she was 'standing on the top of golden hours and human nature seeming born again.' He had said then (and time had proved him right) that hired

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invading armies could never defeat a people with such a sense of purpose. He looked for every sign of such a spirit now, not only among the English, but in Germany, the Tyrol and the Peninsula. This was the beginning of popular nationalism in Europe, and Wordsworth knew it better than any other man in England.

His first group of political sonnets was written in or about the year 1802. Both in versification and prophetic character they were modelled on Milton. Wordsworth also saw in his mind 'a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep,' and he desired his countrymen to devote themselves to their mission with almost a Puritan's virtue. That such a national spirit, at home and on the continent, could be invoked against Napoleon, was Wordsworth's stirring apprehension. 'By the soul only, nations shall be great and free.'

This was his theme, not only in the sonnets, but in the *Tract on the Convention of Cintra*. In this lengthy pamphlet Wordsworth examined the failure of the British authorities in the Peninsula to take proper advantage of Wellesley's victory at Vimiero, and while from the military point of view he may have condemned them too severely, on the psychological and political issue he was right incontestably. The British forces, as he pointed out, had been sent to the Peninsula to encourage the Spanish and Portuguese patriots in their resistance to the French, yet in the Convention the British authorities had ignored and even scorned them. No doubt, from the point of view of the old-style British generals, the insurgents were an impossible lot. But Wordsworth would no more have permitted such an excuse than Byron would have allowed the disunities among the Greeks to have dissuaded him from Missolonghi. How could these ill-trained and ill-equipped rebels have made such a fight of it against the finest troops in Europe if they had not been impelled by moral heroism of the highest order? So Wordsworth argued.

> The power of armies is a visible thing,
> Formal, and circumscribed in time and place;
> But who the limits of that power shall trace
> Which a brave people into light can bring
> Or hide, at will,—for freedom combating?

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So clear was Wordsworth's prophecy that he foresaw not only Napoleon's overthrow by the forces of nationalism but even the unification of Germany and Italy that were to come about half a century later.

Now that the tendencies of Nationalism have had time to work themselves out it is difficult to share the enthusiasm with which Wordsworth greeted their first arrival. One is tempted to question his assumptions and to examine his facts rather more closely. It is unfortunately not at all clear that Nationalism has been the all-permeating Liberal force that Wordsworth expected, and high-souled wars waged for it have had the habit of ending, not in free constitutions and social progress, but in reaction and dictatorships. The unification of Germany led to Prussianism, and to-day we are more conscious of Mussolini than Mazzini, of Pilsudski than Kosciusko. Even from the point of view of our own island, while George the Third may have been preferable to Napoleon (it is arguable), is not Wordsworth's grandiloquence excessive? The notion that the 'people' of Great Britain were struggling for 'Freedom' seems a little droll. Was it the Freedom that they were left to enjoy under Sidmouth and Castlereagh?

The better of these sonnets seem to spring from a real magnanimity. And yet the basis of political statement on which they rest is sometimes so weak that one is almost tempted to the dangerous doctrine that they should be read with no proper attention to their political context. Some of the less successful betray a sorry inflation. It is all very well for Wordsworth to tell us to admire the King of Sweden who 'work hath begun of fortitude, and piety and love,' but what language is this to describe an announcement by the half-mad and altogether disastrous Gustavus that he would press for the restoration of the Bourbons? It is surprising that even Wordsworth should have felt it to be notably pious.

In truth, Wordsworth rather easily allowed his tone in these poems to be more imposing than the situation would now seem to have warranted. And this led him to pomposity and a proud abasement that were equally unpleasant. His general debt to Milton has been noted, and there are some unflattering particular resemblances to the patriotic sentiments of the *Areopagitica*.

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Milton observes that God reveals his truth, as his custom is, first to his Englishmen, and then laments that they have so often proved unworthy; and Wordsworth alternately informs his countrymen of their unique destiny, and upbraids them that they are too slothful to realise it. This is the invincible combination of pride and meekness that has so often led the Anglo-Saxon to inherit the earth. It has marked patriotic poetry since the first beginnings of our middle-class empire.

During the last war it was especially popular. While some of our divines were licking the temple dust in an effort to get God to beat the Germans, some of our professors were hunting up their Wordsworths and finding quite a new interest in his patriotic poetry. There were even publications on the subject. Perhaps the most regrettable was the chapter, ' The Lessons for the Present War of Wordsworth's Statesmanship,' in the book on *The Statesmanship of Wordsworth,* written in 1917 by Professor Dicey. This sort of writing normally comes from academic persons who have been searching for some spiritual authority to justify deeds which ordinarily they would feel to be abhorrent. Professor Dicey, assisted by his reading of Wordsworth, came to the edifying conclusion that although in a war waged for Liberty and Truth no one would wish to be carried away by mere desire for retaliation, yet ' we must also remember that it is our duty to do justice (and it may be very stern justice) in the way of punishment to Germany.' Looking back, one may agree that the ' punishment ' was very stern: one may perhaps doubt whether it was ' justice.'

Unfortunately, Wordsworth lends himself to such ' lessons.' His prejudices and his idealisms merge equally in self-righteousness, and in wartime that is what the public above all wants to be given. Both the liberal and the jingoistic streaks were in him early. The first group of sonnets contains ' Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour! ' But it also has ' Inward within a hollow vale I stood,'—that survey of British patriots ending with the remark (it would be annoying only if it were less silly), ' France, 'tis strange, hath brought forth no such souls as we had then '; and the indecent academic heroics of ' Shout, for a mighty victory is won '—though, as a matter of fact, it was not won, but only anticipated by the poet in an uninspired

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moment. But on the whole, Wordsworth clearly entered the war as what might be broadly called a liberal, and it was under this inspiration that his best patriotic verse was written. He came out of the war as dull a poet of reaction as one can find anywhere. He began with ideals for making the war a crusade of regeneration; he ended it with blasphemous requests to the Deity to accept thanks for the settlement imposed upon Europe at Vienna.

As the war continued, Wordsworth became less intent upon his ideals and more engrossed with the passions of the moment. After all, the immediate business was winning the war. For a while, much to his sister's distress, he even became a volunteer himself (for home service) and one can be confident that if the French had ever got to Westmorland they would have found Wordsworth fighting with the foremost. The war saw an ever-narrowing conception of Liberty. At first, though he had primarily meant by it the struggle for national independence against rulers who might be imposed by foreigners, he had felt that the first-fruits of this struggle would be a general liberalising of society. This is of course the hope with which all liberals (I use the word in its general sense) set out when they would justify a war, but during its progress they devote more and more of their energies to the securing of victory, and by the time it has been won they never seem to be left in a position to ensure the carrying out of their original intentions. In a democracy it is the part of the liberal-minded to sanctify a war, of the tory-minded to wage it.

When a war has once been declared, an individual can support it or oppose it. But he must do one or the other; no middle course is possible. And if he supports it he must of necessity temporarily forgo his liberal principles and act like a tory; if he opposes it, though he is devoted to his country, he must seem like a traitor. The would-be liberal patriot is commonly one who has no deep-seated moral objection to war, but only a distaste for the illiberal measures that are necessary to win it. Such a man usually fastens on some idealistic element he can find in the struggle and by announcing this to the world tries to spiritualise the war for himself and his countrymen. As the war goes on the implicit impossibility of a middle position impresses itself upon his character and the process of winning the war irretrievably tarnishes his initial idealism.

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This is what happened to Wordsworth, and the record of it is to be found in his patriotic poetry. When the war was over, his work was done, and all he had to do was to sit beside his cottage door and explain that ' it was a famous victory.' This he achieved to his apparent satisfaction, in a couple of odes and a handful of sonnets. For our present purpose there are two points of interest about the volume. In the Advertisement Wordsworth does notice the great distress that the war had occasioned, but believes that it will be transient (it lasted pretty well into the forties), and in any case he thinks it would be wrong to allow it to veil ' the splendour of this great moral triumph.' Secondly, Wordsworth says that these poems ' may be considered as a sequel to the Author's " Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty " '; which brings us forcibly up against the fact that by ' Liberty ' Wordsworth meant little more than freedom to choose one's own national dynasty. That was something, no doubt, but how limited a meaning for so large a word! Is it any wonder that Shelley, Hazlitt and the rest thought him an apostate? Of England in the year of misery 1814, when the ordinary people alike in the countryside and in the new industrial towns were more poverty-stricken and repressed than at any time for a hundred years before or since, Wordsworth could write:

> Hail to the crown by Freedom shaped—to gird
> An English sovereign's brow! and to the throne
> Whereon he sits! whose deep foundations lie
> In veneration and the people's love,
> Whose steps are equity, whose seat is law,
> Hail to the State of England! And conjoin
> With this a salutation as devout,
> Made to the spiritual fabric of her Church.

The sentiments were as spurious as the construction was faulty and the language stilted. Wordsworth had ceased to feel that generous political passion which had been the valid inspiration of his earlier sonnets. He had set out to liberalise the war, and he had ended by illiberalising himself. He had changed as his use of the word ' patriot ' had changed. When as a young man in France he had acknowledged himself a ' patriot,' his heart ' was

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all given to the people ' and ' his love was theirs.' Now when the word fell from his lips it was followed, not by ' the people,' but by Constitution, King and Church. He had commended the war to the spirit of his public and his own spirit had fallen its victim.

II.

There is less need to discuss in detail the parts played by Tennyson and Rupert Brooke in the wars of their times, for the typical elements in their response had already been shown in Wordsworth's response to the war with Napoleon. For forty years after that war England had had peace. By the end of that time she had forgotten what it felt like to be at war and many of her people were undeniably willing to refresh the national memory. The middle-classes were now completely in the ascendant in society, their civilisation was substantial and (to themselves) satisfactory. But it did lack glamour, and some even found it sordid. If another war should be declared there would without doubt be a large public disposed to welcome it and extremely eager for the attendant exploits and victories. A war, in short, was about due, and we easily drifted into one.

Of all our wars few can have had less justification than that in the Crimea. In origin (even by normal diplomatic standards) it was by no means 'inevitable,' its conduct was most unsatisfactory and it caused the greatest suffering. It came about chiefly because two men, Lord Palmerston and Stratford Canning, realised the potentialities of the situation and instinctively felt that the public at home was ready for their course of action. The original dispute between Russia and Turkey about the Holy Places in Palestine had been practically settled. The note sent from Vienna over the signature of the chief powers of Europe had been accepted by the Russians and would certainly have been accepted by the Turks had not Stratford Canning, who was British Ambassador at Constantinople, urged them that in its present form it was unacceptable. And as he amended it, it proved unacceptable to the Russians. Russia had already temporarily occupied two border provinces of the Turkish Empire, and Palmerston pressed vigorously for war with them. He was confident that the country was excited by the prospect, however shallow the pretext. So, in

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company with the parvenu French Emperor, the aspiring King of Sardinia, and Mohammedan Turkey, we went to war with the Christian Emperor of Russia over the custody of the Holy Places. Once we were in the war (however needless it may have been) the public wanted its heroics. Tennyson, who was Poet Laureate, was admirably fitted by his abilities and his shortcomings to oblige them. He did not hesitate.

It would be superfluous to try to add anything to Mr. Nicolson's general account of the way in which Tennyson's aspiration to be the Public Bard interfered with the flow of his poetry. Ever since he had associated with the Apostles at Cambridge he had been in danger, and he was doomed once he was appointed Laureate. In all things he endeavoured to express the Higher Thoughts of the Better People, and when the Crimean War came he was far too adequate a Laureate to remain silent. With his remarkable ignorance of the affairs and cultures of Europe, his bigoted insularity, his facile technique and his easy spiritual inflation, he was by far the most suitable literary personage to interpret the public's mood for it.

As a technician he has sometimes been compared with Virgil. He was not unlike him in wanting to be the bard of a prosaically successful empire. True, the eagles had got a little dingy He had only Queen Victoria for his Augustus, and London for his Imperial City. But at any rate the Russians were thoroughly adequate Barbarians and the Light Brigade a splendid equivalent of the Roman Legions. War was no sooner declared than Tennyson started.

At the time he was working at *Maud*. He had nearly finished it, but one cannot be quite sure how it would have ended had not the war opened and settled that for him. Posterity has thereby been left with one of the most surprisingly incongruous conclusions in the history of literature. After the poor neurotic hero has been torn and perplexed through two long Parts of the poem, there comes a Third Part (of merely five verse paragraphs) in which he suddenly discovers a tremendous interest in public affairs and all his troubles vanish! From this turgid ending we gather that all the fears of his little life have been swallowed up in the great wave of excitement caused by the war, which bears him exultingly onward. Tennyson is too skilled an artist to reveal

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his shallowness by being over-explicit, but the prosaic reader would assume that in a fine burst of enthusiasm his hero enlisted. Let us hope he did not think better of it when he reached the Crimea and discovered the realities of that great adventure.

This curious tail-piece contains all the stock ideas we have come to expect from the modern patriotic poet. The war is a great crusade against tyranny, and in it the ordinary man will forget the sordidness of his prosperous past.

> It lighten'd my despair
> When I thought that a war would arise in defence of the right,
> That an iron tyranny now should bend or cease,
> The glory of manhood stand on his ancient height,
> Nor Britain's one sole God be the millionaire.

Tennyson's hero (it is a common symptom of war-fever) feels that as he is drawn into the Cause he loses his private afflictions and merges everything into the Higher Reality.

> It is time, O passionate heart and morbid eye,
> That old hysterical mock-disease should die.

But whether he lose his private perplexity or not, what a magnificent liberation of soul for his country!

> Let it go or stay, so I wake to the higher aims
> Of a land that has lost for a little her lust for gold,
> And her love of a peace that was full of wrongs and shames,
> Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be told;
> And hail once more to the banner of battle unroll'd!
> Tho' many a light shall darken, and many shall weep
> For those that are crushed in the clash of jarring claims,
> Yet God's just wrath shall be wreak'd on a giant liar.

Just about here Tennyson's technique began to desert him a little, as it so often does desert writers who try to harness their God to a faction. (Writers of ancient war poetry were at least more objective, and from their ample pantheon could reveal some gods as fighting on one side and some on the other). Tennyson goes on to his grandiloquent conclusion:

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Let it flame or fade, and the war roll down like a wind,
We have proved we have hearts in a cause, we are noble still,
And myself have awaked, as it seems, to the better mind;
It is better to fight for the good, than to rail at the ill;
I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind,
I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assign'd.

The volume, *Maud and Other Poems,* appeared in 1855. Besides the title piece it contained *The Charge of the Light Brigade, An Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington,* and a few other poems. The volume must have had some effect for in eleven years it went through thirteen editions. And *The Light Brigade,* which appeared originally in *The Examiner,* was reprinted and sold everywhere as a pamphlet. And one may consider with it another poem, *The War* (later known as *Riflemen Form*) which appeared in the *Times* in May, 1859, and did much to stimulate the Volunteer movement.[1]

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[1]That the war passages in *Maud,* though a small part of the whole poem, attracted attention, may be illustrated by a reference to an *Anti-Maud* published in 1855 by ' A Poet of the People.' Almost all of it attacks *Maud* for its jingoism. A couple of stanzas may be quoted:

Who clamours for war? Is it one who is ready to fight?
Is it one who will grasp the sword, and rush on the foe with a shout?
Far from it;—he is one of a musing mind, who merely intends to write,
He sits at home by his own snug hearth, and hears the storm without.

I grieve that a noble soul should trudge on a beaten road,
And a voice that can move the heart—a vulgar war-whoop swell;
Hounding his brethren onwards, urging them on with a goad
To the smoking field of death, where the contestants close with a yell.

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We have noticed how Wordsworth allowed his interest in a foreign war to diminish his zeal for reform. Tennyson is even more explicit.

> Let your reforms for a moment go,
> Look to your butts and take good aims,
> Better a rotten borough or so,
> Than a rotten fleet or a city in flames!
> Form! Form! Riflemen form!
> Ready, be ready, to meet the storm!
> Riflemen, riflemen, riflemen form!

This is sad stuff. But, in spite of the fact that its rhythms have been dinned into our ears since schooldays, the same cannot quite be said of *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. Technically, at least, it is quite efficient popular verse. And even the most militant pacifist would not deny the heroism of its theme. The most quoted lines in it,

> Their's not to reason why,
> Their's but to do and die,

led Shaw (I believe) to say that the poem must be the greatest satire we have on the profession of soldier. But unfortunately satire and irony were far removed from Tennyson's thoughts. There seems, indeed, to have been an unusual popularity in Victorian times for this theme of ' Faithful unto Death.' People were especially moved by the spectacle of fidelity in the unreasoning creatures: in dogs, in children and in the lower orders of society. What might be called the Casabianca ' motif ' has seldom been so prevalent in literature and painting. But although one might well wish there had been more ' reasoning why,' especially on the part of the public, one can admit that the poem has certain merits. It is not sentimental, and it is not pompous. But even if one thought it splendid, one would have to say, echoing the French general, *C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre.*

Thus Tennyson and Wordsworth showed many similar qualities in their patriotic poetry. Wordsworth took a wider view (perhaps because he was a solitary, far from the madding crowd),

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and he certainly approached nearer to great poetry and was more truly liberal-minded in the early stages of his war than was Tennyson. But the predominent elements in their 'messages' are similar: that the war is a crusade, not a vulgar scramble, that the individual can lose in it the petty cares of peace, and that through it regeneration will come for both individual and nation. Rupert Brooke, who may be taken as the third illustration of modern war poetry, is not accorded the poetic rank of Tennyson and Wordsworth, but the mood of his war poetry is comparable to theirs, and one is ready to read him with greater respect for the perhaps not strictly logical reason that he at least carried his feeling to the farthest possible point of action.

III.

The wars of the latter half of the nineteenth century were small and distant from England, but that which began in August 1914, was at our very doorstep. And it would clearly need the whole resources of the nation for its successful prosecution. In mobilising opinion the British Government was very fortunate, particularly in the cry of 'poor little Belgium.' The steps that committed us to the war were taken before Germany invaded Belgium, but the invasion followed so quickly that the Government was actually able to make the pretence that we were entering the war because of the tearing up of 'the scrap of paper.' This was an immense advantage in appealing to the chivalrous instincts of the people. The late E. D. Morel said that Truth is the first casualty in every war, and this use of the invasion of Belgium was but one glaring instance of the way in which the British (and of course all the other) governments tricked the half-formed idealism of young men into 'the service of the country.' The result of this appeal may be read, rather pathetically now, in the verses written by the civilian soldiers of the early war-days. There are few claims now made for their poetic value, but they have their human value none the less, and show how men felt that their finest impulses were linked with the struggle. The forgotten Streeter's line, 'O Liberty, at thy command we challenge death!' may typically express the feeling of most of them. In the later years there came reaction, and the exaltation

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of the poets of 1914 was succeeded by the bitterness of Sassoon and the realism of Robert Nichols. Rupert Brooke is the only one of the early war poets still generally read by the public. He did more than merely express the current mood of idealism: his expression of it was so influential that he helped to form and perpetuate it in others. And, as has often been said, his death set the seal on his reputation.

He was concerned with war more personally than were Wordsworth and Tennyson, and yet it must be said that in inspiration his war poems are curiously derivative. So much is this so, that one is forced to question their ultimate authenticity. They are unquestionably sincere at a certain level, but they seem to lack an achieved integrity of spirit. The most fitting criticism is undoubtedly that of Charles Sorley, another soldier-poet (I take it from Mr. Middleton Murry's essay, *The Lost Legions* in his *Aspects of Literature*):

'He is far too obsessed with his own sacrifice. . . It was not that "they" gave up anything of that list he gives in one sonnet: but that the essence of these things had been endangered by circumstances over which he had no control, and he must fight to recapture them. He has clothed his attitude in fine words: but he has taken the sentimental attitude.'

If one examines these sonnets one finds that they were written in a way which would inevitably evoke the 'stock responses.' Their vogue was due to that, and to their author's technical ability. The first sonnet,

> Now God be thanked who has matched us with his hour
> And caught our youth and wakened us from sleeping

sounds that same note we heard in Tennyson and Wordsworth. The nation is to arouse itself from sloth and throw itself with God-given strength into the struggle. And Brooke finds a relief not unlike that of the hero of *Maud* in leaving 'all the little emptiness of love' and abandoning himself to war enthusiasm. Again, in his third sonnet, there is the old quaint feeling that in peace there was something dishonourable, and that the war has somehow brought back 'Holiness' (what a ghastly notion!):

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Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.

It would have been interesting to have seen, if Brooke had lived, whether in 1917 he would have written as Sassoon did. By then most of the poets, except the stay-at-home ones, were disillusioned. But just as idealism in the other countries was ebbing out, there came a new and embarrassing flood of it from America. This was only natural—we had felt it earlier. But the fact that this mood and ours so badly synchronised was the psychological factor behind some of the surface friction that surprised those who looked for an entirely smooth alliance. It is said that when in 1917 Mr. Masefield told the graduating class of Yale University that war was ' damned dirty, damned dull, and damned disgusting ' there was an astonished silence and they did not know what to make of it.

If one looks back, then, at some of the typical war poetry of the last hundred years, one may make certain generalisations. The poetry that has been popular has been that which has told the public in accents of sincerity, if not of the completest intellectual integrity, that the war was a righteous war and one of God's own choosing. With the aid of any idealist elements they could find in the struggle, the poets have ' liberalised ' the war for the verse-reading public and for those influenced by the verse-readers. They have suggested that the peace preceding the war had been sordid, and that this war would be in the cause of Honour because it demanded sacrifices from those who had been prosperous previously. The services of the poets have been especially important in rallying the middle-classes: somehow the working-classes, though they may have responded to calls, have preserved a not uncritical sense of humour, and quite literally, have ' made less of a song about it.' In looking at the history of mankind one's final feeling may be disgust at our incompetence in permitting the continuence of war as an institution, but in reading the war poetry of the last century one is above all impressed by the way in which the surface stirring of generous impulses has assisted in the perpetration of barbarity.

H. L. ELVIN.

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EXCURSION

I was thankful when we landed
For the quiet heave and dip of man-swung oars;
And those dry fish scales on the granite jetty;
And water nudging weeded bulwarks. These
Were an assurance that the sea still kept
Her first uncalendared tradition, changeless always,
And constant in the attitude of change. That day,
The garish seaport town, with August heavy on it,
For me held a faint root among the Heroes;
I hoped from their cold resurrected ashes
Some chance-stored spark might light a modern tinder,
And I was glad to find,
Among the men who loitered on the jetty,
Some who still spat and were not tied
To facts and figures. I knew well their tongues
Could raise a world of myth for sixpence,
And stole some comfort from this knowledge.
Lacquered telescopes, in situ on the promenade,
For less would quench the eye's strong lust for distance,
Groping for buoy and headland where the sun
Blurred out the edged horizon. I was glad
To lounge and drop all purpose like the trippers;
And with them be self-conscious in my ease—
Pay twopence for a seat where one might hear
Wagner emphasised upon the trumpet, or admire
Scarlet geraniums planted out in rows.
Somewhere I have read
That men released from prison do strange things;
But we, that day released, did nothing stranger
Than to pretend we always lived at ease
Among the gestures of this sea town: yet we knew
The same conditions clamped and bolted us.

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The thin grey smoke haze on the skyline
Suspended sentence of return to us who served
The gilded gods of debt and balance.

* * * *

I have often thought
Geranium's fierce colour held a key
To life; and glimpses might be caught
In seamen's eyes of some dim prophecy
Withheld. Such things, seen in a day
Of aimless crowds and cheap banality,
Have blinded with the sense of vision brought,
As sun seen at the end of a dark passage way.

C. H. PEACOCK.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

THE LITERARY RACKET.

things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!

In discussing the state of reviewing with people of experience—reviewers, editors, publishers and authors—we were commonly, when illustrative anecdote had begun to accumulate into monotony, presented with the conclusion: 'But everybody knows all about it. And anyway, there's nothing you can do.' In a sense everybody does know. Yet if we could print (as for sufficiently obvious reasons we cannot) some of the choicer of the instances we collected, most of the readers of *Scrutiny* would have a shock. For the fact is that the cultivated in general do *not* realize how completely reviewing has ceased to have anything to do with criticism: honest and intelligent reviews still occur, but the function of reviewing (the legitimate function) has lapsed.

Even observing the discretion necessary to escape legal revenge (the law of libel is not as an outraged sense of decency would have it) we might yet surprise the reader with histories and other data illustrating the value of advertising, the reach and thoroughness of the Literary Racket, and the power and vindictiveness of the gangs. But it would still be felt that, while all this was no doubt representative of the classy Sunday papers, the dailies and the more hearty weeklies, yet it had little bearing on—well, on the only weekly (whichever it is one may have chosen) that an intelligent person can read. And to bring the bearing home would require a particularity that is obviously precluded.

This is not to deny that there are honourable exceptions (again particularity would be indiscreet). But it would be in any case a mistake to stress exclusively racketeering and the grosser forms of abuse. What is meant by saying that the function of reviewing has lapsed may be best put in this way: though the

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need for intelligent reviewing is greater than ever it was before, no intelligent critic can hope to find steady employment in the exercise of his qualifications.

Why this is so may be indicated by considering the problem that faces a conscientious literary editor. In the first place the problem is one of dealing with the sheer bulk of reading-matter that comes to the office for review. He would be a gifted person if he could decide offhand which of some scores of books are worth serious criticism. Moreover, even if he could, intrinsic value could not be the final criterion determining space and treatment: publishers are clients of the Advertising Manager, as the most conscientious editor can never be allowed to forget. To rescue him from this predicament—that is, to spirit away the obscene fact of its existence—there is to hand the fraternity of Higher Reviewers, themselves products and victims of the situation. Some of them may once have been potential critics. But they, like the editor, have livings to make, and in the process of making a living they have inevitably left behind what critical qualifications they may have had.

Nevertheless, they are distinguished critics and authorities, with pretensions to maintain and self-esteem to cherish. The inevitable outcome, as indicated in the first number of *Scrutiny*, is solidarity. See them fall upon the rash outsider who undertakes to remind the world what serious standards are. As for the traitor from within, anyone inclined that way does not need the comradely warning that revolt means extinction. But we will not, by instancing melodramatic cases of this kind, give them a disproportionate emphasis. Comradely feeling (and there is a great deal of it) has in general much pleasanter functions. There are those little dinners at the Berkeley, those cocktail parties, and so on, where authors and reviewers learn to ' get together.' Mere sense of decency makes unkind reviews or reviews in the wrong spirit impossible.

And so what might appear to be the problem facing the conscientious editor disappears. As for that pamphlet called *Have with you to Great Queen Street* which came out some time ago—well, pamphlets—or episodes—of that kind don't often come out.

But social pressure and the pressure of the Advertising

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Manager are, after all, symptoms rather than causes. The radical fact is the advance of civilization. The supply of literature has become an industry subject to the same conditions as the supply of any other commodity. For many firms publishing is a business like the manufacture of 50/- suits, and the methods of Big Business are accordingly adopted. The market is raked for authors—for potential profit-makers—the wares are boosted by the usual commercial methods. The gigantic advance in output that makes good reviewing more than ever necessary has been its destruction—by asphyxiation in various forms.

Are we, then, beating the wind? Those who tell us so, tell us at the same time that these things are commonplace. They may be. But we do not believe that the greater number of clients of the 'higher journalism' realize how preponderantly the reviewing they read is what it is—oil for the cogs of the publishing machine. To get this fully recognized by those capable of recognizing it has never been whole-heartedly attempted. It is worth attempting. And there is certainly somewhere a public—if it can be mobilized—that will support criticism—if it is offered.

THE WORDSWORTHS AND COLERIDGES

AN ESTIMATE OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, BY HIS CONTEMPORARIES, 1793-1822, by Elsie Smith, Ph.D. (Blackwell, 18/-).

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH: THE EARLY YEARS, by Catherine Macdonald Maclean (Chatto and Windus, 15/-).

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. Edited by Earl Leslie Griggs (Constable. Two vols. 37/6d.).

Those who attempt to gather the literature concerning the Wordsworths and Coleridges have equipped themselves from the beginning with capacious book-cases, but they will need more yet.

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The three works now under notice are typical of the accessions that are always occurring. The ghost of Crabb Robinson, too, is not laid. 'What various manuscripts we meet' in almost every general sale catalogue, proposing to industrious minds fresh studies in the Lake Poets and their little clan!

All three of the present publications are the results of research, but one is cast in a form concealing the processes of scholarship as much as possible: this is Miss Maclean's biography of Dorothy Wordsworth, which has the air of being everybody's reading, not limited to those who grow agitated over the printing of a letter without the inclusion of the postmark. The writer has traced out, through a circumstantial chronicle, an intimate portrait of a wonderful woman. It may be noted, in regard to the position of Dorothy Wordsworth among those who were so much indebted to her gift, that this book includes enough actual pictures of them, but no physical portrait of her. The method chosen by Miss Maclean for her general presentation, although it will attract some, must be troublesome to others. Perhaps there is a justifiable jealousy, touching a personality so delicately fine as that of Dorothy Wordsworth; as she took the trouble to record her own experiences so often, we are liable to be prejudiced against any adaptations of her own testament, however thoughtfully evolved. The description of presumed emotional apprehensions, like that which occupied so much of Miss Lowell's biography of Keats, is hazardous. 'Why the swift flame to end in darkness? Why the brief ecstasy of the blood to lead to a huddle of tortured days? Why the barter of a life for a strange, late flowering? Truly Life drove a cruel trade.' These reflections, these locutions are put before us as the thought of Dorothy Wordsworth when she passed the grave of Mrs. Ibbetson; but they do not quite harmonise with what we know of her way. Miss Maclean writes with fluent fancy, and with touches of rhapsody ('Gold dust of poetry rained from heaven upon them all'); her affection for Dorothy is the beauty of the book, which has disadvantages besides the main one of uncertain though picturesque paraphrase and conjecture—especially, the sequence of paragraphs without transitions, effective in a brief narrative but scarcely so in this long one.

Dr. Smith's compilation follows the chronological order of Wordsworth's publications, and affords us a view of opinions on

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his powers and performances until the time when—being fifty years old—he was no longer 'a young poet,' and 'of great promise.' These opinions are collected from the magazines and reviews of the time, from the letters of friends and acquaintances, from Crabb Robinson, and from one or two additional sources in prose and verse. The plan of campaign has been easily sufficient for the filling of some 400 pages; but I am inclined to think Dr. Smith has mainly overlooked the daily and weekly newspapers, and it is easy for anyone who has invaded those to forgive her. Still, as one may judge by the many bulging scrap-books of that period, the critical notices and correspondence and verses friendly or mischievous which appeared in the morning, evening and Sunday press had a great share in the formation of public taste in poetry. A writer in the *Times Literary Supplement* has already indicated the minor errors, misprints and so on, in Dr. Smith's pages; notwithstanding all which, it is useful to have a means of consulting Wordsworth's early reviewers without disturbing the old *Gentleman's Magazine, Analytical Review, Monthly Reviews* and other slumbering antiquities.

Among these new Romanticities, Professor Griggs's book is the grandee; it is, indeed, an important first edition of S. T. Coleridge. Almost forty years have passed since the other collection of Coleridge's letters, also in two lordly volumes, was produced; and E. H. Coleridge besides bringing off that feat left considerable preparations for what is now achieved. There is no describing the labours of Professor Griggs in a sentence or two, and as he intends to edit the whole of Coleridge's extant correspondence he does not wish for compliments at present on the range and particularity of his enquiries. Let us condole with him over his visit to Malta in search of his hero's official and unofficial papers there. They *were* there, until 1900, when one of those bonfires that men make every now and then for the torture of coming hero-worshippers was successfully organized. Selecting from what he has rescued in other places, Professor Griggs sets before us 400 letters of Coleridge, many of them very long and most of them rather longer than in a non-Coleridgean system of daily affairs they need have been. (Some of these relics are not entirely new to print, but the correct and complete versions amount to fresh discoveries.)

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The letters of Coleridge are like everything else of his, a class apart, and they have the contrasted qualities which even his poetry-book has; now you think him a consummate ass, now nothing 'less than Archangel ruin'd,' and very often as wise a man of this world as ever breathed. The multitude of his interests and personal contacts alone makes such volumes as these bewildering. He had the privilege of opening his mind to a host of people remembered or forgotten now, but attracted to him and analysed by him with affectionate zeal. He is an egotist of the most thorough-paced kind, but egotism is on the whole nothing like vanity; it is the intense operation of a sleepless mind, which everything in experience sets going in a new cogitation,—Scott's poetry or Mrs. Rundle's '*Cook-away Book*,' Newton's Assumptions or a bumble-bee in a fox-glove. One of the blessings of such editorship as that of Professor Griggs is that we are given our Coleridge unbowdlerized; for his impulsive violences of expression are as much part of his genius as his mildest cooings. Sometimes, however, he lost an opportunity, as thus: 'Some genius in a pamphlet entitled '*Hypocrisy Unveiled*' written against Mr. Wilson has pronounced poor Christabel "the most obscene Poem in the English language"—It seems that Hazlitt from pure malignity had spread about the Report that Geraldine was a Man in disguise. I saw an old book at Coleorton in which the Paradise Lost was described as an "obscene Poem," so I am in good company.' The Coleridgean intonation of the word 'dear' has always been a pleasant thing to his audience (as when 'dear' Sara spilt the boiling milk on his foot); and here is another variant: 'Dear Mr. Estlin in speaking of me in a large company a few weeks ago said—"His intellects are all gone, Sir! all his genius is lost, quite lost. He is a mere superstitious Calvinist, Sir!"'

In a sense, we have already heard 'all about Coleridge,' the subtle-souled psychologist of Shelley's poem; we know the marvellous power, the magnificent torso, the mass of decaying spices, and other such classic definitions, and nothing can change the sense of a splendid failure implicit in his life. But there are passages in his history to elucidate and modify, questions of a medical importance to answer by reconsideration,—and countless instances of his poetical and practical faculties to add to those which have been enjoyed before. Here may be mentioned the

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chief groups of letters included by Professor Griggs: to Byron, to Derwent, Edward, George, Mrs. S. T. Coleridge, to the Morgans, to Poole, to Sotheby the epic poet, to the other epic poet Southey, to Daniel Stuart and to Josiah Wedgwood. And another little group to Mr. Dunn, Chemist and Druggist, Highgate, discloses Coleridge's occasional 'recourse to an Anodyne' under Dr. Gillman's very nose.

EDMUND BLUNDEN.

AND THE NOVEL?

FOUR TIMES AND OUT?

SARTORIS by William Faulkner (Chatto and Windus, 7/6d.)

Mr. Faulkner's *Sartoris* will make him a popular novelist. It may, in fact, bring the Faulkner Club to an ignominous end by making him a book-society choice. Mr. Gerald Gould, whose proud immaculateness prevented his reading *The Sound and the Fury,* can venture insides its covers without any fear of meeting a Freudian bugaboo. It may even please him.

If one were feeling that way, one could suggest that the story of the Sartoris family, and in particular of young Bayard's tragedy, was evolved by crossing *Beau Geste* with *Death of a Hero*. There is, aside from certain impressive episodes which were bound to be sharply told since Faulkner is telling them, a noticeable effort to derive some meaning from the tale of a family whose men fling their lives recklessly away while their women-folk with a resigned impatience watch them die. But the comment does not go beyond interjected notes on Bayard's inescapable doom and the 'blind fate' which controlled the family fortune. Clearly Faulkner never decided what this doom was.

In two earlier novels Faulkner invented a new style and wisely or unconsciously limited himself to the kind of story which demanded no other skills than those he possessed. Again here he has augmented the technical resources of the novelist by showing how unnecessary it is to tell a story covering several generations by the linear method. *Sartoris* has an extraordinary depth because

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events widely separated in time, but spiritually akin, are made to seem simultaneous. In this respect it is an achievement, for it puts to new uses the discoveries of Proust, Joyce and Virginia Woolf.

But Faulkner proposed to do more than write a saga in a new way. He not only attempts irony and the sinister, in which modes he is accomplished, but true tragedy as well. We are, that is, asked to believe that young Bayard is a tragic hero though he has not as much right to the dignity as Hotspur. The author of his being was rebuffed by the cold despair which kept everyone except his twin and idol from knowing his heart. It is impossible to have much sympathy for a skyrocket.

The novel was put to press too soon. There are bad repetitions, dissonances and absurd echoes, *e.g.* that sour reminiscence of Keats which closes the book, particularly unfortunate because of its association with (of all people) Horace Benbow. Faulkner, if he goes on at this rate, can easily lead the pack that help the *Saturday Evening Post* sell mouthwash to 50,000,000 Americans. He probably will. That way passed Robert W. Chambers—he, too, wrote a first novel—and Hergesheimer and others. Only the propagandists among American novelists, Dreiser, Sinclair, Dos Passos, are sufficiently self-willed not to succumb to the disease of mediocrity.

WILLARD THORP.

A SERIOUS ARTIST.

MANHATTAN TRANSFER by John Dos Passos (Constable, 7/6d.).

THE FORTY-SECOND PARALLEL by John Dos Passos (Constable, 7/6d.).

NINETEEN-NINETEEN by John Dos Passos (Constable, 7/6d.).

After *Manhattan Transfer* (1927) one remembered the name of John Dos Passos. After *The Forty-second Parallel* one looked eagerly forward to the succeeding members of the trilogy (for something of that order seemed to be promised) in the conviction

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that we had here a work demanding serious attention as no other appearing under the head of the novel during the past two or three years had done. *Nineteen-nineteen* is a challenge to justify the conviction.

The Forty-second Parallel established Mr. Dos Passos as an unusually serious artist—serious with the seriousness that expresses itself in the propagandist spirit. Unlike Mrs. Woolf, his antithesis, he cannot be interested in individuals without consciously relating them to the society and the civilization that make the individual life possible. Consequently, society and civilization being to-day what they are, his stress falls elsewhere than upon the individual life as such. In *Manhattan Transfer* his theme is New York, representing our 'megalopolitan' civilization: 'The terrible thing about having New York go stale on you is that there's nowhere else. It's the top of the world. All we can do is to go round and round in a squirrel's cage.'

The undertaking involves a peculiar technical problem, one that none of the methods customarily associated with the novel will meet. No amount of enthusiasm for collective humanity will dispose of the fact that it is only in individuals that humanity lives, that only in the individual focus does consciousness function, that only individuals enjoy and suffer; and the problem is to suggest the multitudinous impersonality of the ant-heap through individual cases that, without much development, interest us as such. *Manhattan Transfer* represents a sufficient degree of success. It is of the essence of Mr. Dos Passos' method here—and of his vision of modern life—that of no one of his swirl of 'cases' do we feel that it might profitably be developed into a separate novel; and yet we are interested enough. Here we have them in poignant individuality, a representative assortment of average men and women, engaged in the 'pursuit of happiness'—a pursuit sanctioned by the Constitution, but, of its very nature, and by the very conditions of the civilization to which they belong, vain. "Darling, I'm so happy . . . . It's really going to be worth living now." Money, Success, Security, Love—in varied and ironical iteration we see the confident clutch: '"Elaine," he said shakily, "life's really going to mean something to me now . . . . God, if you knew how empty life had been for so many years. I've been like a tin mechanical toy, all hollow inside."'

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Manhattan Transfer ends with Jimmy Herf (the character to whom the author seems closest) walking, with an air of symbolic finality, out of New York. *The Forty-second Parallel* gives us the America into which he walks—a large undertaking, which calls for some modification of technique. The representative lives stand out more and are given less in episode-dialogue and more in consecutive narrative; narrative admirably managed in *tempo*, and varied dramatically in idiom with the chief actor. The 'Newsreels' interspersed at intervals are a new device, their function being by means of newspaper-clippings and the like, in ironical medley, to establish the background of the contemporary public world. Moreover, also at intervals, there are lives, admirably compressed and stylized in what might be called prose-poems, of the makers, the heroes, the great men, the public figures, of American civilization. Thus Mr. Dos Passos seeks to provide something corresponding to the symbolic figures of a national epic or saga.

In general, for him, to be representative is to be unimpressive, and of his private characters only one is impressive and saga-like in his representativeness: J. Ward Moorhouse, 'public relations counsel.' It is significant. In him is embodied the power that, in the general disintegration, in the default of religion, art and traditional forms and sanctions, holds society together—the Power of the Word, or, let us say, Advertising. 'Clean cut young executive,' says J. Ward Moorhouse, looking at himself in the glass: the magician has reason to believe in the magic; it works for him. On this theme the author's art achieves some of its triumphs, and the aspect of modern civilization it exhibits is terrifying. 'We are handling this matter from the human interest angle . . . . pity and tears, you understand'—can a hundred D. H. Lawrences preserve even the idea of emotional sincerity against the unremitting, pervasive, masturbatory manipulations of 'scientific' Publicity, and, what is the same thing, commercially supplied popular art?

'In America a fellow can get ahead. Birth don't matter, education don't matter. It's all getting ahead.' In the close of *The Forty-second Parallel* we see America welcoming an escape from this 'getting ahead,' a 'meaning' with which to exorcise the void, in the War. *Nineteen-nineteen* gives us the War. The

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second part of the trilogy is decidedly less lively than the first. For one thing, the monotony of this world without religion, morality, art or culture is here, perhaps inevitably, emphasized. And this leads us to the more general question: What is lacking in the work as a whole (so far as we have it)?—why, in spite of its complete and rare seriousness, does it fall so decidedly short of being great?

For answer we have the state of civilization it celebrates. 'I guess all he needs is to go to work and get a sense of values,' says a character in *Manhattan Transfer,* exemplifying one of the author's best ironic effects. The comment on the prescription is the society portrayed: what kind of a sense of values can one acquire, what does a sense of values mean, in such an environment? The artistic shortcomings of Mr. Dos Passos' most ambitious work (which is not, like *Manhattan Transfer,* held together by the topographical limits of the setting) might thus be, not merely excused as inevitable, but extolled as propagandist virtues: they are necessary to a work that exhibits the decay of capitalistic society.

The argument, of course, would be specious. And the point in view might be made most effectively by reframing the question to run: What is lacking in the work as propaganda? This question is answered by asking what it is that Mr. Dos Passos offers us in the way of hope. The suggestion of hope, if it is one, that *Nineteen-nineteen* ends upon is revolution. Whether Mr. Dos Passos intends irony will, perhaps, be made plain in the last volume of the trilogy; but, as it is, the promise must appear as ironical as that upon which *The Forty-second Parallel* closed. Someone in *Nineteen-nineteen* says: 'it will take some huge wave of hope like a revolution to make me feel any self-respect ever again.' Such a wave of hope, in a world inhabited by Mr. Dos Passos' characters, would, it must seem, be of much the same order as the wave engendered by the outbreak of the War. His revolutionaries are as inadequate, as much 'tin mechanical toys, all hollow inside,' as his other persons. He plainly realizes this where they are intellectuals; where they are proletarians there is something embarrassingly like sentimentality in his attitude.

It may be that the concluding volume of the trilogy will show this last comment to be unfair in its implications. And perhaps

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comment on the inadequacy of individuals is discounted by Mr. Dos Passos' philosophy. Nevertheless a literary critic must venture the further judgment that the shortcomings of the work both as art and propaganda are related to a certain insufficiency in it when it is considered as an expression of personality (which on any theory a work of art must in some sense be). It is more than a superficial analogy when the technique is likened to that of the film. The author might be said to conceive his function as selective photography and 'montage.' That this method does not admit sufficiently of the presence of the artist's personal consciousness the device called 'The Camera Eye' seems to recognize—it at any rate seems to do little else. What this judgment amounts to is that the work does not express an adequate realization of the issues it offers to deal with.

How far the defect is due to the method, and how far it lies in the consciousness behind the method, one cannot presume to determine. But Mr. Dos Passos, though he exhibits so overwhelmingly the results of disintegration and decay, shows nothing like an adequate awareness of—or concern for—what has been lost. Perhaps we have here the disability corresponding to the advantage he enjoys as an American. In America the Western process has gone furthest, and what has been lost is virtually forgotten. Certainly Mr. Dos Passos seems to share—it is a confirming sign—the attitude towards art and literature that so curiously qualifies the intelligence and penetration of Mr. Edmund Wilson's *Axel's Castle* (a book which only an American could have written). 'Art,' for the aspirant to 'culture' in *The Forty-second Parallel*, is 'something ivory-white and very pure and noble and distant and sad.' The mind behind 'The Camera Eye' seems to conceive of 'culture' after much the same fashion in rejecting it: '. . . . grow cold with culture like a cup of tea forgotten between an incenseburner and a volume of Oscar Wilde.'

What has disintegrated—this is the point—is not merely 'bourgeois' or 'capitalist' civilization; it is the organic community. Instead of the rural community and the town-community we have, almost universally, suburbanism (for the nature and significance of suburbanism see the article by Mr. W. L. Cuttle in *The Universities Review* for October, 1931). The organic community has virtually disappeared, and with it the only basis for

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a genuine national culture; so nearly disappeared that when one speaks of the old popular culture that existed in innumerable local variations people cannot grasp what one means. This is no place to try and explain. But let them re-read *The Pilgrim's Progress* and consider its significance, *Change in the Village, The Wheelwright's Shop,* and the other works of George Bourne, and, say, Cecil Torr's *Small Talk at Wreyland,* and then, for a commentary on the passing of the old order, go to *Middletown.* The education in reading offered, for instance, under the auspices of the W.E.A., is a substitute, and, as everyone who has lent a hand in it must at some time have realized, a substitute that can hardly begin to negotiate with the student's needs, and so must almost inevitably tend to a conception of Art as ' something ivory-white and very pure and distant and sad.' (It is relevant here to note that Mr. J. H. Fowler, in *The Art of Teaching English,* holds Ruskin to be ' the greatest writer of English prose that ever lived.')

The memory of the old order, the old ways of life, must be the chief hint for, the directing incitement towards, a new, if ever there is to be a new. It is the memory of a human normality or naturalness (one may recognise it as such without ignoring what has been gained in hygiene, public humanity and comfort). Whether, in a world of continually developing machine technique, a new order will ever be able to grow may seem doubtful. But without the faith that one might be achieved there can hardlly be hope in revolution. ' There'd be gaiety for the workers then, after the revolution,' says someone in *Manhattan Transfer.* And in *The Forty-second Parallel* we read of ' quiet men who wanted a house with a porch to putter around, and a fat wife to cook for them, a few drinks and cigars, and a garden to dig in.' This is all that Mr. Dos Passos suggests (as yet) concerning the way in which meaning is to be restored to the agonized vacuity that it is his distinction to convey so potently.

It seems to me that the more one sympathizes with his propagandist intention, the more should one be concerned to stress what is lacking in his presentment of it. To hope that, if the mechanics of civilization (so to speak) are perfected, the other problems (those which Mr. Dos Passos is mainly preoccupied with) will solve themselves, is vain: ' you know,' says someone in *Nineteen-nineteen,* 'the kind of feeling when everything you've

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wanted crumbles in your fingers as you grasp it.' Men and women might, of course, find happiness—or release from unhappiness—as perfect accessory machines. But that is hardly a hope for a propagandist to offer.

F. R. LEAVIS.

'THE BOOK SOCIETY RECOMMENDS. . . .'

It is important to know what is being read in fiction, and most of all what is being read at the book-society level—the level, that is, at which popular successes are believed to be Literature. 'Novel' now covers so many non-comparable pieces of fiction that it is necessary to realise that gulfs exist between (a) the novel by a serious artist which succeeds (or does not) as a work of art, (b) the novel—*e.g. The Sound and the Fury, The Waves*—which is merely the work of a practised author doing technical stunts, (c) the novel which answers to the book-societies' conception of Literature, (d) the low-level best-seller. Class (c) is probably in most need of critical attention at the moment, since, for reasons I have suggested elsewhere, it looks like imposing on the educated public a spurious idea of what constitutes an important novel.

The *Rogues Herries* saga, *Broome Stages, The Good Companions,* have all been popular successes that have jerked their authors suddenly on to the level of 'classics,' and suggest some reflections upon the curious history of these authors. It seems to have been forgotten that Mr. Hugh Walpole commenced novelist as one of a younger group to whom Henry James gave respectful recognition in *Notes on Novelists;* that Miss Clemence Dane's early novels were thought worthy of serious criticism; and that Mr. Priestley, on the other hand, was an insignificant writer who justly received no attention at all. All three—stumbled upon?—no, arrived at, a popular formula which is the same formula, and now Mr. Louis Golding, upon whom the uncomfortable mantle of the late Israel Zangwill had fallen, and who had begun to work out his difficult destiny with several unsuccessful but not uninteresting novels, has elected to take the easier way. *Magnolia Street* is infinitely worse than any other novel he has written, but it is bad in a special

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way; any thoughtful reader of *The Good Companions* could have picked it out in advance for a Book Society choice. The characteristics of the novel of the Priestley genre are: meaty reading (value for money), defiant romanticism, a hearty intimacy with the reader, and a final warm note of rosy prophecy. Like his patrons, Mr. Golding will doubtless devote himself to turning out more popular successes, so that no one interested in the Novel need bother about him further. Here possibly is one answer, or part of one, to the question, What's wrong with the Novel?

Another meaty success of the same society's making is Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*. Though it does not exist to be defended as a work of art, there seems to be a general feeling in critical circles that like *The Forsyte Saga* it is justified as a social document; just as that is said to give the enquiring foreigner a notion of the Victorian upper middle-class, so *The Good Earth* is supposed to give the occidental reader a veracious picture of Chinese culture and psychology. Anyone feeling a need to check this assumption should read Mr. Younghill Kang's review of *The Good Earth* in the *New Republic* (strange that no English periodical had the common sense to get an informed reviewer) and his longer article on the same subject in *The Symposium* for July of this year, where he registers a dignified disgust that ' *The Good Earth* has won its appreciation as a realistic novel, a true picture of the Chinese peasantry and a true rendition of Chinese psychology ' while being ' as false in its way as Cooper's dream-world of American Redskins.'

The top level of book-society choice is now the novel that calls out the critical vocabulary of Beauty—' a thing of beauty,' ' rare distinction,' ' exquisite,' ' enchanting loveliness,' the reviewers say. Mr. Ronald Fraser (whose *Rose Anstey* was backed by the late Book Guild) and Mr. Charles Morgan are characteristic recipients of these badges, though it would be unfair to Mr. Morgan to class *The Fountain* with *Rose Anstey* without adding that the latter is the grossest case of beauty-hunting. *The Fountain* is not gross, it is nothing wrapped up in veils of carefully composed sentences that have no emotional roots. Mr. Morgan (and the other novelists of this kind) for all their earnest determination to be literary might not be writing in an age that has witnessed the innovations of Joyce, Proust, Lawrence and

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Mrs. Woolf. Quotations from *The Shropshire Lad,* Milton, *Adonais,* Plato and E. B. Browning appropriately usher in his sections; this is thin soil to plant a modern novel in, and the general effect, as might be expected, is much that of *The Testament of Beauty*. And as of Bridges's poem, it is a damaging consideration that its admirers are pretty sure to find ' unpleasant ' those modern works in which the sap flows—*The Forty-second Parallel,* for instance, and *Cakes and Ale*. Conviction that *The Fountain* is a beautiful piece of fiction precludes enjoyment of the sardonically critical spirit which gives life to *Cakes and Ale,* and alternatively, admiration of *The Fountain* comes easily to those who find ' modern ' novels distasteful. Hence the *Times Literary Supplement* declared that ' intensity of inspiration ' would be recognised as characterizing Mr. Morgan's previous novel by all those who, like the *Times Literary Supplement,* ' can still savour the classic tradition of English prose.' Incidentally, the novel of Beauty seems to have superseded the school of David Garnett, which is at least a point in its favour (oh that wit!).

By the way, it is painful to find Mr. Blunden (alas, Saul is also among the prophets) justifying his or his colleagues' choice of a very amateur story, *The Soldier and the Gentlewoman,* on the ground that it would have delighted Gibbon. Why Gibbon? We know that Gray's taste in fiction was lamentable, but what reason is there to assume that Gibbon would not have known better?

Q. D. LEAVIS.

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AD IMAGINEM SUAM

THE ESSENTIAL SHAKESPEARE by J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge University Press, 3/6d.).

The habit of making fantasy Shakespeares is now discredited. So that Professor Dover Wilson does not pretend to any great seriousness in offering the Grafton portrait as an alternative to the Stratford bust. It is harmless speculation, for it does not touch the plays: no one was ever disturbed in reading *Lear* by a recollection of that pudding faced effigy. To relate four plays, including *Hamlet,* to the career of Essex is to make the fantasy much less airily irrelevant. It involves a manipulation of the evidence (*e.g.* a silence 1600-1603) and does not, without more proof, invite assent.

The Professor's style is breezy to the point of exuberance. Dowden's Four Periods are adopted, except that In the Depths becomes On the Heights—On the Razor Edge he calls it. Here ' The majestic peaks around him, Mount Othello, Mount Lear and the twin heights of Macbeth and his lady . . . keep him from slipping into the abyss of madness, brutality and despair that yawns beneath his tottering feet.' There is a note of hearty bluffness, transferred to Shakespeare (' this printing press was a new fangled invention ') which goes with Shakespeare's attractively virile vices, and with the Professor's taste for Rupert Brooke. *Measure for Measure* is compared with *The Waste Land.* It is also on the same page compared with *Point Counter Point.*

The Essential Shakespeare was obviously written for schools. It has already become popular there. It is easy to read: it contains much information, authoritative, doubtful and simply ' credible.' The scholar will sift for himself: the schoolboy will swallow the lot. Anyone who can respond to the passage quoted is unlikely to be capable of sufficient detachment to treat even the overt fantasy in the spirit in which it was written and it is only too probable that fifty per cent. of next year's School Certificate candidates will be firmly convinced that the Grafton portrait is the only true likeness of Shakespeare. M.C.B.

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THE ORATORS : AN ENGLISH STUDY by W. H. Auden (Faber and Faber, 6/-).

If *The Orators* is disappointing it is chiefly because one reads it as the successor to *Poems*. From the first book it was evident in the way in which he handled words, in his use of rhythm and imagery, that Mr. Auden was a poet of considerable technical ability; what he wrote was exciting, even when its significance was not clearly made out. One looked forward, therefore, to a work in which he would show a fuller control of his technique, in which his lyrical, merely poetic gifts, would be co-ordinated to a fuller purpose; but the most careful reading of *The Orators* fails to reveal such. One is faced, instead, by that obscurity to which his publishers, not without a certain smugness of inverted commas, draw our attention. The book, particularly in the opening prose section—the verse of the last, shows for the most part a falling off, a noticeable rhythmical weakening—is an interesting and moving experiment, which again emphasizes the fact that Auden's talent is specifically a poetic one (the distinction prose-poetry does not arise here), but it leaves the impression that it is as experiment rather than as achievement that it is remarkable. Or rather as a series of experiments, for the book has considerable technical variety. Throughout the first section one feels the influences—though they have been put to an exhilaratingly personal use—of Rimbaud and, more particularly, St. J. Perse, whose *Anabase* one would imagine Auden had been closely studying; just as in the last and perhaps most satisfactory of the Odes, there is a strong reminiscence of Emily Dickenson. Not that this supposition of influences, even if correct, is in itself in any way derogatory, but the fact that these two carefully stylized sections are divided by the naturalistically unorganized Journal of an Airman does give evidence of a lack of purposive organization which would account for one's disappointment.

It is probable that Auden had this criticism in mind when he was writing the opening sentences of the Journal: ' Organization,' he says, ' owes nothing to the surveyor. It is in no sense pre-arranged,' and though he does not state explicitly that this is intended as poetic theory, it would certainly seem to have an application to his method. And this impression is confirmed by the following phrases from a connected passage: ' while the fact that

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a state of tension seeks to relieve itself, seems to us perfectly obvious, *an orderly arrangement, the natural result of such an effort. . . .*' If this be intended as an account of the genesis of a poem (its similarity to the point of view of the *surréalistes* is striking) it would in large measure account for the obscurity of *The Orators,* for it amounts to proclaiming the absolute independence of the poetic impulse of any conscious intellectual direction. The poet's world, that is to say, is a system of arbitrary and private—Auden frequently insists upon privacy—values, to which the reader can only gain access by initiation. Failing that the poem must remain inchoate, to be enjoyed sporadically but not fully apprehended: but it should be emphasized that the resultant obscurity is different in kind and not merely in degree from the obscurity of *The Divine Comedy,* the ' great difficulty ' of which Auden comments on, ostensibly to an audience of school-boys, but with one eye also, perhaps, on his readers.

DOUGLAS GARMAN.

MENCIUS ON THE MIND by I. A. Richards (Kegan Paul, International Library of Psychology, etc. Pp. xvi-132. Appendix Pp. 44. 10/6d.).

Dr. Richards continues in this book his study of the problems surrounding verbal communication. The first essential for accurate communication, one tends to suppose, is exact and unambiguous statement, but the central theme of this book is the necessity for flexible understanding and tolerant interpretation. Dr. Richards illustrates the principle in examining a passage of critical writing by Herbert Read, a passage whose meaning can be grasped from indirect clues although the wording will not stand ordinary critical inspection. Dr. Richards takes the keywords, Reasoning, Hypothesis, Fact, and Truth, and finds for these words senses that will render the whole passage self-consistent and acceptable in meaning. Reasoning for instance is to be taken ' *not* as inference from fixed explicit premises to a definite conclusion according to explicit rules; but as the placing of a number of observations in an intelligible order, a perceptible or rational structure.' The

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value of such a method of interpretation is unquestionable: it treats communication as a serious undertaking that demands co-operative effort, and it turns its back on the flippantly competitive pastime of terminological dispute. It is a method that most decent-minded people follow already, more or less wittingly. Dr. Richards' contention is that the time has come to make it explicit. He suggests the need for a dictionary of 'Multiple Definitions' which should show the full range of meanings attached in Western and Eastern cultures to the more important terms in psychology, ethics, aesthetics, and so on. In illustration of the technique he himself gives multiple definitions of the terms Beautiful, Knowledge, Truth, and Order.

Dr. Richards seems to have left it to his readers' common sense to see that tolerance and flexibility of interpretation ought not to condone laxness of statement. I take it that future writers would, ideally, adhere to one sense for each term, and that the dictionary of multiple definitions would be used chiefly for the elucidation of earlier writers. The question is perhaps complicated by the fact that difficult thought is almost always uttered in poetic language where the control of understanding is not dependent on the narrow sense of the words, or in terminology invented *ad hoc* and seldom current beyond the writings of its originator. Explicit multiple definition would perhaps provide a bridge between the poetic and the scientific utterance of subtle intuitions. (One thinks of Trigant Burrow, whose efforts to communicate it would be instructive to compare and contrast with Blake's, since several of their intuitions seem to have been similar). But when the thought is fairly manageable, as it is in the passage by Herbert Read, it points to a serious defect in the writer if we have to resort to multiple definition before his words will make sense. Dr. Richards does not comment on the fault but he can hardly mean to condone it.

His attitude to communication becomes of peculiar importance when one culture is to be interpreted to another, and *Mencius on the Mind* consists largely in the attempt to translate and explain a few psychological passages from the Chinese thinker without distorting their meaning. Part of Dr. Richards' purpose is to draw attention to the intrinsic worth of Mencius' views, particularly on questions that modern writers regard as being on

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the borderline between psychology and ethics. It is largely because no such borderline existed for Mencius that his attitudes and assumptions are so attractive. But although Dr. Richards is extremely illuminating on Mencius' psychological conceptions, a large part of his purpose is to show that the task of interpretation is an almost impossible one. To stress the point he prints the passages in question in a very valuable Appendix, showing the Chinese characters and their literal translation. This Appendix gives a hint of the amount of ' smoothing ' that must have been done by some translators from the Chinese. But apart from the difficulties of language structure the commentator meets more fundamental obstacles in the form of peculiarities in Mencius' habits of thought and speech. And, as Dr. Richards shows, analysis of such characteristics in a remote culture may give us more insight into similar peculiarities in our own.

One of the most serious obstacles in the way of interpretation is Mencius' use of blanket terms, each covering what to us are several different meanings. ' *Ku*—with its senses of cause, reason, hold to, conviction, accepted of old, established, fact, datum, phenomenon—seems to stand for an idea which is none of these but out of which they may be developed through elaborated distinctions. Such a word as ' because ' in ordinary unreflective English has a somewhat similar width and vagueness of reference. Or ' grounds,' if we let its metaphor come to life, may give us something like its undifferentiated seeming simplicity.' One tool for tackling the difficulty is multiple definition. Not even multiple definition can succeed completely, however, for we cannot assume that Mencius intends *one* sense of a word in one place and a different sense in another: what he intends is a more primitive notion, inclusive and undifferentiated. It would not be accurate even to say that he intended a ' blend ' of our meanings. This difficulty Dr. Richards insists on throughout the book, but his success in revealing some markedly unfamiliar types of meaning shows that insistence on the difficulty is a way of partially solving it.

Formal praise of *Mencius on the Mind* should be unnecessary if these notes have suggested anything of its scope and its subtlety. The two aspects of the work—the technique of elucidation and the value of what is elucidated—are inseparable, and this of

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course adds to the difficulty of the book by making explicit, simple statements next to impossible. Part of the difficulty that many readers will experience is due to Dr. Richards' rather cryptic way of writing—a device perhaps for demanding competent reading. At times it seems almost as if he were trying to provide non-mathematical people with a development of thought as impressive and recondite as relativity. Thus he suggests that we should be unwise if we overlooked 'the possibility that the structure and functioning of the minds (including his own) that Mencius was discussing might differ from our hypothetical standard Western mind. . . Even though we refused to allow that differences between minds go very deep, we shall do well to ask ourselves just how we are estimating depth in this matter. And whether we are entitled (and if so, how) to take cognition, affection, conation, for example, for necessary co-ordinates in our comparisons as we take our three spatial co-ordinates in comparing boxes.' But the point is left too little developed to possess its full force even as speculation. The one example given, namely the possible absence of 'cognitive contemplation' or 'autonomous cognitive interest' among Chinese thinkers is of doubtful value, for it might be difficult to prove that such a mode of activity occurs even in Western minds. Further, although the absence of 'theoretical interest' in Mencius is undeniable, this is surely very different from an absence of cognition. It is an error of tactics not to have argued this speculation more explicitly and more fully, for the suggestion, in spite of being revolutionary, is at present too nebulous to be stimulating.

A final quotation may indicate not only the Intention of the book but its Tone too, both of which will probably irritate those whom Dr. Richards means to irritate. 'Most studies of the processes of abstraction have been made as incidental steps in ambitious metaphysical undertakings. A more modest sense of where we are in our effort to comprise the universe in our thought would turn more attention upon our intellectual instruments. their historical development and their possible extensions.'

DENYS W. HARDING.

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CHAUCER by G. K. Chesterton (Faber and Faber, 12/6d.).

This book avowedly makes no claim to specialism of any sort in the field of Chaucerian scholarship. It does not profess to reconsider the subject in the light of recent research—rushlight or gas may still serve. ' A man ' remarks Mr. Chesterton ' might learn more of the special spirit of Chaucer by looking at Daisies than by reading a good many annotations by Dons '—a characteristic gesture and suggestive of the method which he himself prefers to pursue, though it must not be supposed that he has never availed himself of the researches of dons in this book. The plain reader, however, requires more guidance than this to the understanding of Chaucer's sophisticated urbanity as it shows itself, for example, in the skilful pastiche of the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women.*

Mr. Chesterton, as might be expected, is more interested in the historical aspects of his subject than in those which are more purely literary, but the general question of Chaucer's relation to his sources is forcibly handled. ' In that vanished world of community of thoughts and themes, a tale or a topic was in some sense set up . . . . to be told over and over again with variations by different storytellers . . . . One author did not so much rob as enrich the other.' This ' free trade in stories,' as W. P. Ker once called it, did not preclude spontaneity and sincerity on the part of the translator. The claim that Chaucer's translations were often ' more original than the originals ' is here supported by particular reference to the early translation known as the *A.B.C.*

The reader should be warned that Mr. Chesterton, like the Parson of the *Canterbury Tales,* is not always ' textual,' though, unlike the Parson, he does not submit his work to the correction of clerks. He writes from a full but unrefreshed memory which may confuse one poem or one speaker with another (*e.g. The House of Fame* with the Prologue to *L.G.W.,* or the words of the cock with the ironic comments of the Nun's Priest), or attribute the complimentary phrase ' my disciple and my poet ' to Gower instead of to Venus. Such lapses may easily be corrected if the reader does what Mr. Chesterton has failed to do and looks up the text. It is a more serious matter when the poet's personal opinions on political, religious or other questions are arbi-

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trarily deduced from the speeches of his characters, from a Boethian quotation, or from a direct translation like the Parson's Tale. For the real purpose of this study is not the appreciation of Chaucer's poetry but the more familiar and hazardous attempt to reconstruct the opinions and character of the man from his work. Mr. Chesterton has his own thesis and selects his evidence to prove his point. It is one upon which, as he says, he cannot be expected to be non-controversial. The superior sanity and normality which he finds in Chaucer are apparently at once the cause and the result of his being envisaged as 'the final fruit and inheritor of the mediæval order.' He is thus made to symbolise 'the Ages of Faith' as contrasted with 'the Ages of Doubt and Schism'; he is the text for a disquisition on the superiority of the mediæval order with its balanced philosophy to the unbalanced philosophies of the present:—'it is because we miss the point of mediæval history that we make a mess of modern politics.' From this standpoint Mr. Chesterton appears to invest Chaucer with a kind of cosmic significance:—'he made a national language; he came very near to making a nation' (in which he apparently collaborated with Joan of Arc). The claim that he made the English language—by 'Frenchifying it enough to make it English' be it noted—is one which has long since been refuted from the evidence of the language itself.

As always, Mr. Chesterton shows himself provocative and stimulating even when most paradoxical. He is the last heir of the euphuistic tradition and can 'hunt the letter' or pun with the best of them. To quote his own words: 'the very sense of this is its nonsense; its aptitude is its ineptitude.' It has the true Gilbertian ring.

H. M. R. MURRAY.

REMINISCENCES OF D. H. LAWRENCE.

Some who are most impatient of the traffic in personalities that substitutes for interest in literature turn with eagerness to reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence. I have said elsewhere that he matters because he was a great artist. But the case is not so simple as that might suggest. His art bears a peculiarly close relation to the man—

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' the man who suffered '—and that is its importance. If we find him great, the supreme importance of his books is perhaps that they assure us that he existed. Those of them which are most successful as art are in some ways saddening and depressing. The fact of personal existence of which they assure us is perhaps the most cheering and enlivening fact the modern world provides. Here was a man with the clairvoyance and honesty of genius whose whole living was an assertion of what the modern world has lost. It is plain from his books that he was not able to maintain steady confident possession of what he sought—wholeness in spontaneity; a human naturalness, inevitable, and more than humanly sanctioned; a sense, religious in potency, of life in continuity of communication with the deepest springs, giving fulfilment in living, ' meaning ' and a responsive relation with the cosmos. But it is equally plain that he didn't merely seek.

And it appears, too, that his best creative work was not fully representative of him. He himself—the personality behind the best stories—was a less equivocal incitement than these to the recovery of what has been lost. The man appears saner than the art. And how essentially sane are some of those works in the mixed mode—those lyric-expository prophetic extravaganzas, which, for all their preoccupation with the dark gods, are lit with sun. It was not, in any derogatory sense, an abnormal mind that wrote *Apocalypse*.

It may be that Lawrence is approached largely in a wrong spirit, but it is difficult to believe that his influence can be anything but wholesome, and it is exhilarating to think that in a world of suburbanism, book societies and Marie Stopes he imposed himself. Only those who suppose his message to be that of *The Conquest of Happiness* are likely to see in him the all-sufficing wisdom that will save us. But it is a suspect wisdom that dismisses him in fear or revulsion or contempt. That is why some who a good while ago formed the habit of taking the *Criterion* seriously, now, when they compare the obituary attention given to Harold Monro with that which was given to Lawrence, feel a kind of final depression.

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Whether the book that was the occasion of this note and has been withdrawn was unjust as well as objectable-against one cannot presume to determine. Interesting personal reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence present a problem; they are bound to give offence somewhere. But whether or not D. H. Lawrence would have brought objections against *Son of Woman* was, for various reasons, a problem the author had no need to let worry him overmuch. We may be sure, however, that if Lawrence could make his comment now it would be worth listening to.

F.R.L.

PRIVATE PLEASURE

THE YEAR BOOK OF EDUCATION 1932. Edited by Lord Eustace Percy (Evans Brothers, 35/-).

THE TRIUMPH OF THE DALTON PLAN by C. W. Kimmins and Belle Rennie (Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 6/-).

REMINISCENCES OF A PUBLIC SCHOOLBOY by W. Nichols Marcy (Elkin Matthews, 6/-).

Here are three books—a bird's-eye view of the world of school—a puff of a teaching method—a defence of a way of living. Here you may learn that Monmouth demands a quarter of an hour longer for scripture than Cornwall, that Ernie Todd aged twelve prefers the Dalton plan because you can spend more time on the subjects in which you are weak, that louts who accuse prefects of immoral relations with fags are, unless they quickly apologise, justly and soundly thrashed. Data to support almost any contention. Ratepayer, well-fed, daring his wife to contradict, may thump the breakfast table, shout ' Disgraceful. They're playing ducks and drakes with our money. The nation

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can't afford it.' Folk-dancer, remembering a once-sore behind, thinks 'Ah, had the masters loved me, I should have expanded like a flower.' Old boy in club, having another, solemn as a clergyman declares 'You can't get away from it. A good school stamps a man.'

It is going on. It is going to be like this to-morrow. Attendance-officer will flit from slum to slum, educational agencies will be besieged by promising young men who have no inclination to business, examiners chuckle over a novel setting of the problem of Achilles and the Tortoise, fathers sell grand pianos or give up tobacco, that little Adrian or Derek may go to Marlborough or Stowe.

Like everything else in our civilization, the system we have made has become too much for us; we can't stop the boat and we can't get out into the cold sea. The snail is obeying its shell. All we can do is to become specialists. Just as the soldier devises new methods of gas attack, or the poet a new technique of verbal association, the teacher vigorously pursues the logic of his tiny department. 'How many pupils can I get?' 'What is the optimum method for getting the greatest number of them through school certificate?' No one can afford to stop and ask what is the bearing of his work on the rest of the world, its ultimate value. It's his job, his bread and butter. Should he stop for one moment, there's his ego dinning like a frightened woman 'But what's going to happen to me? You'll be sacked without a testimonial.'

Education, all smoothly say, is the production of useful citizens. But, good God, what on earth is a useful citizen just now? If you are a policeman or a cabinet minister, it's a person who won't give you any trouble. Education is a dope to allay irritation. If he is poor, now that you no longer want him very much on the land but in mass-production plants, better give him something to think about lest he sense the absurd inadequacy of the operations he is made to do, and start to smash. Better teach him enough to read the *News of the World*. Every worker shall attend an elementary school. If he's rich, your sort, then segregate him with the other young of your sort, let him year by year through his school-days feel all the excitement of a social climber, and make him so afraid of the opinions of your sort, that you

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may be sure he'll never do anything silly, like forgetting his class. Public school men will always lend each other money.

But there are some, who, though comfortably off, with no right to fear, have nightmares. 'Of course, the world is really alright,' they say, 'it's only the way I look at it. If I'd been differently brought up, if men had understood me, life would be the jolly thing it ought to be. Besides, even if there is anything wrong with the world, if I do try to do anything about it, I shouldn't make any difference: I should only lose my money. It's all so very diffy. Let's go and ask the children. Perhaps they will know. Now remember; no slapping. The most wonderful thing in the world is love.'

And off they go to live with the children, and splendid they are at it too. The children brighten up no end,—in their heads. Stupidity which is a natural defence against living beyond one's means collapses under the intense fire of their kindness. Girls of eleven paint like Picasso, boys of sixteen write pastiches of Joyce. Every child responds to the love smarm—for a bit. But emotionally it withers. Before a man wants to understand, he wants to command or obey instinctively, to live with others in a relation of power; but all power is anathema to the liberal. He hasn't any. He can only bully the spirit.

And so unconsciously the liberal becomes the secret service of the ruling class, its most powerful weapon against social revolution.

For the freedom they boast of is bogus, management by flattery, persuading people that your suggestions are really their own. Its power lies in the inexhaustible vanity of the human heart. Don't think that you can behave as you like in a liberal school—a little recalcitrance, yes that is amusing, but a will of your own! Make no mistake about that.

The public schools are at least better than that. They offer an intense social field, the satisfactory nature of which can be seen in the fact that, their members, like bees taken from a colony, when they leave it, spiritually die. They fail because they are only for the splendid people: they are economically parasitic. Those who leave them will not attempt to create a similar kind of society in the world because that would mean admitting the others, those who have frizzed hair, or eat peas with a knife.

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But what can one do? Dearie, you can't do anything for the children till you've done something for the grown-ups. You've really got nothing to teach and you know it. When you have repapered the walls perhaps you will be allowed to tell your son how to hold the brush. In the meantime some of us will go on teaching what we can for a sum which even in its modesty we do not really deserve. Teaching will continue to be, not a public duty, but a private indulgence.

W. H. AUDEN.

WORLD-LOSERS

1. *THE DISCOVERY OF POETRY by P. H. B. Lyon.*
2. *POETRY AND THE ORDINARY READER by M. R. Ridley.*
3. *ABOUT ENGLISH POETRY by C. F. Bradby.*
4. *THE ART OF TEACHING ENGLISH by J. H. Fowler.*
5. *EXERCISES IN CRITICISM by David Shillan.*
6. *COMMON SENSE ABOUT POETRY by L. A. G. Strong.*

' But aren't they at the Tennyson stage? ' said someone to a schoolmaster who proposed to introduce an upper form to Mr. Eliot's work. The background and attitude implied in this objection sterilizes the teaching of English in schools as exemplified in such books as the above—taken from dozens of their kind in the library of an energetic specialist. The conceptions of poetry they authorise are so pernicious that the intelligent product of such teaching is likely to be permanently excluded from an interest in poetry: the intelligent may graze for a time on a very limited and profitless plot. They provide no critical armoury: though five of the authors would reply by pointing to their laborious discussions of rhythm in terms of musical notation and classical feet. They can do nothing to check an ' increasing inattention,' for they are themselves part and parcel of it.

Number 1 (which was hailed by a heavy review as one of the most important contributions to English criticism since the war) is the kind of book a Censor should suppress at once. ' " Motorbuses

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for town stop here,'' ' says Mr. Lyon, ' is not a poetical phrase, and '' The stars rush out, at one stride comes the dark '' is definitely poetry; but you would find it hard to say why.' It is not hard to see what Mr. Lyon expects from poetry:—' We live there in our dreams, and in our waking hours books and our own wandering thoughts are ever at hand to guide us there.' (My own thoughts wander to p. 320 of Dr. Richards' *Practical Criticism*.) If these quotations sound like something from *The Observer*, they do their author no injustice; and Mr. Lyon's discovery of good poetry in Messrs. Binyon and Gibson typifies the ineptitude of such mentors as these in approaching the modern field.

Papers read before the English Association are incorporated in Number 4, Number 2 consists of broadcast talks, while Number 3 avoids the usual tract of classical metres by referring the reader to Professor Murray. Mr. Shillan manages in the same breath to recommend Nos. 1 and 3 and to invoke Dr. Richards' books, but disclaims any intention of offering a digest of his ideas. After this it was hardly modest of him to answer the questions ' What is a poem, what kind of an experience does it offer, what is rhythm? ' etc. Dilution is a fitter word for a process wherein are cited such authorities as Miss Sitwell and the Archbishop of York. Thirty unsigned poems are then presented for evaluation, with tuck-in sheets revealing authorship and criticism, which invites us to approve of the products among others of Canton, Wolfe, Longfellow and Meredith, while *modernique* at the tea-shop level is represented by Miss Sitwell. So no surprise is occasioned by finding Donne reprimanded as farfetched and perverse.

Mr. Strong's book is not meant for schools, and its intentions are less pretentious and its tone less nauseating than its companions. ' What the book does attempt is to suggest that, among all activities of mind and body, none has a better claim on man's attention; and to show how far common sense can take us towards an understanding of poetry.' And it may justify its existence by converting Plain Men into lovers of Pure Poetry; but it is unfitted for general use in schools by the limitations and implications of his second aim, together with such weaknesses as the recommendation of *Poems of To-day* and the devotion of a quarter of the book to metres. It might be tried on the First Fifteen.

DENYS THOMPSON.

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AMERICAN LIBERALS SEEKING A HOME

TRAGIC AMERICA by Theodore Dreiser (Constable, 10/-).

DEVIL TAKE THE HINDMOST by Edmund Wilson (Scribners, 10/6d.).

ONLY YESTERDAY by Frederick Lewis Allen (Harpers, 12/6d.).

Theodore Dreiser's *Tragic America* and Edmund Wilson's *Devil Take the Hindmost* are two interesting examples of the tendencies of critical liberalism in America. The liberal critics have acquired a new warrior in Mr. Dreiser. His novels, to be sure, showed an awareness of the extensive evils in American life, but he has not before made a factual attack upon them. *Tragic America* is an avalanche of facts; it has the size of an avalanche at least, if not the grandeur. The facts are imbedded in a paste of political-convention rhetoric, bristling with italics, Roman capitals and exclamation points, redundant and journalese. However sympathetic to his cause, one cannot avoid being annoyed by his method. But worse, one is continually led into suspicion of the facts themselves. Statement after statement is made without the mention of any authority; even such an important one as that in 1930 dividends increased $350,000,000 while wages fell $700,000,000 is offered without analysis or support. Who supplied these figures and must they be qualified in any way? Elsewhere one feels that a more careful presentation of the figures might not be so partial to Mr. Dreiser's case as he would wish. These suspicions of the layman are confirmed by such a reputable economist as Mr. Stuart Chase, who claims to have found nine errors of fact in one chapter. Some of the boulders in the avalanche turn out to be porous stuff, fly-weight.

The general theses of the book are unquestionably correct: that the wealth of the United States is being concentrated in the hands of a few people, that individuals, both as consumers and labourers, suffer abuses by the corporations, that the police, through a blind acceptance of the private enterprise ideal if not

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actually through bribery, commit further outrages upon the 'small individual,' that religion has been corrupted and cheapened by adopting business methods, these general charges are true. It is unfortunate that when Mr. Dreiser attempts to particularize he arouses honest prejudice. Being a Communist and a novelist could he not consider with profit the case of John Dos Passos?

It is impossible to say how Mr. Dreiser would thrive in the Communist state. The charges he brings are largely economic and Communism would mend them. Personal questions he does not mention.

Mr. Wilson's criticism is less a torch-light attack with barrel staves; it is conducted by day, carefully. *Devil Take the Hindmost* is a collection of Mr. Wilson's writings in the *New Republic* during the past year; the first twenty-six are largely accounts of the small man's struggle for existence in various parts of the United States, the labourer, the clerk, the farmer. The book combines the journalistic virtue of empiricism with an imaginative interpretation and coherence. In each article Mr. Wilson sets the scene carefully, describing the town, or the building, or the room, the appearance and nature of the principal characters, and giving what background information is necessary, then proceeding to the event itself. A Communist march on the New York City Hall, the life of workers in Detroit, a short biography of Henry Ford, the struggles of miners and mine unions in West Virginia, these are typical articles. There are exceptions to the usual pattern, as the satire on Los Angeles in semi-Joycean language. But for the most part the author remains an impersonal observer and the writing a meticulous record. It is so skilfully done, however, that he can afford to omit comment. The conclusions are apparent. In the first place, one has a bird's-eye view of America, each section described through a typical spot, the beautiful as well as the ugly, and the economic and social interests of its people are portrayed. One recognizes the same evils that Mr. Dreiser assails, but visually rather than through statistics. And one realises that what prevents their correction is the disorganization of the two groups which have so far been numerous enough to be potentially effective: labor and the liberals or progressives. The Progressive Conference in

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Washington showed that each man present had a different idea of what should be done; nothing was done. But labour, with a far more biting drive to action, is similarly incapacitated. Having proved itself futile the American Federation of Labor can no longer be looked to as a large national organization which from weight of numbers might bring reform. What remains are scattered Communist unions and in between them and the Federation in policy, local unions.

The last three chapters are the most significant. Here Mr. Wilson modifies his journalistic manner to permit himself more analysis and interpretation. The first of the three is ' The Best People '—the wealthy, the managers, the executives, those who feel themselves superior to the rest of the country. Their superiority, Mr. Wilson contends, comes almost entirely from possession of material goods. This is a thin basis. A ruling class, from which an honest feeling of superiority might be derived, they are not. ' Mr. X does not govern. He gets his orders from officials higher up, and they may get their orders from the bankers from whom they borrow. Yet neither bankers nor high officials constitute a governing class: they are merely people of all sorts of origins, capacities and ideals who come and go in lucrative positions. The system they belong to governs, but they are only individuals on the make. They take no collective responsibility and their power is not hereditary—so they have none of the special training which permanent power and responsibility requires and which may dignify and refine a strongly established owning class.'

The question of capitalism is two-fold; it is an economic theory and a way of life. If ' the best people ' could combine in such a manner as to remedy the economic ills their values would still remain to be questioned. This Mr. Wilson does from his own point of view in the next chapter, ' The Case of the Author.' While admitting his bourgeois background he claims never to have been satisfied with the values of the stock-broker class. He has tried various techniques, from Menckenian superiority to ' the liberal attitude that American capitalism was going to show a new wonder to the world,' but these were only compromises and unsatisfactory. Now he is a Communist.

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One may save objections until reading the last chapter, when they become clearer: ' A Man in the Street,' an article of only a few lines. ' He is a tall man with square shoulders—looks able-bodied and self-dependent. A pure Nordic type, he has straight brows and long straight nose.' But he seems soiled, pale, bewildered, incongruous in the wealth of Fifty-eighth Street. From ' the best people ' Mr. Wilson is turning to him; he is the type of the proletariat; he is the norm of the hoped-for Communist order, its ideal. Would Mr. Wilson be satisfied with the culture this man will establish? Or is he taking a romantic view? That is what one suspects. Although doubtless true that economic evils would be eliminated and that living solely to make money would no longer be possible, granting that that would please Mr. Wilson greatly, yet is he not hoping to be more at peace with the new order than actually he will be? Is any mass movement greatly concerned with the sensitive values which concern such a man as Mr. Wilson? One feels that he might find himself on the outside looking in. Certainly when he announced his decision to join the Communist party one heard no cheers from their ranks.

Mr. Wilson and the rest of the critical liberals would reply that they were weary of minority individualism and an eclectic set of standards, that they wanted to be part of a coherent movement, in the flow of an inevitable social current, and that since they cannot remake or modify Marxism they are willing to accept it as it is. Mr. Wilson doubtless wished to imply a turning away from the old values when he described the man in the street, to whom he looks for the future and with whom he will march. It remains a strange picture; one thinks of Rousseau contemplating the Red Indian.

Only Yesterday is a journalistic account of what happened in the 1920's in the United States; it is a useful background to the other books under discussion. All the available material of the scandals of the Harding administration is collected for the first time. The revolt of the highbrows is treated in a cavalier fashion, doubtless wisely. In the other chapters, such as those on dress, racketeering, the Red scare, and the inflation period, one finds what one already knew neatly summarized.

DONALD CULVER.

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ETHICAL RELATIVITY by Edward Westermarck (Kegan Paul, 12/6d.).

Prof. Westermarck is the best of possible guides to the moral emotions. His *History* left upon the reader an impression of peculiar richness: it was rich not only in information, but in sympathy, and it led the reader to sympathize. *Ethical Relativity* leaves a similar impression. Professor Westermarck still has much to say—this time rather about the use men have made of the data of ethics, than about the data themselves—and still knows how to arrange what he says. The old contrast rises to one's mind: how much more encouraging this book is than that, say, of Prof. Moore, with its *non possum* attitude. Prof. Westermarck not only declares that he can, but proves it.

But the contrast with Prof. Moore does not, this time, work so wholly in favour of Prof. Westermarck. Prof. Moore's attitude was extreme, and outraged common sense; but it was taken up at the dictates of metaphysical scruples, and Prof. Moore, whether or not a sound, is an acute metaphysician. There is some propriety about metaphysics dictating to ethics. Prof. Westermarck seems to make ethics dictate to metaphysics, and there is little propriety about that. Further, whatever he may be as a student of ethics, as a metaphysician he is hardly acute.

Consider his definition of objectivity, which we find on p. 3 of the text: ' The supposed objectivity of moral values . . . implies that they have a real existence apart from any reference to a human mind.' Is there any way in which this can be glossed so as to give the semblance of truth to the following statement, which we find on p. 4? ' If any one of the theories of normative ethics has been actually proved to be true, the objectivity of moral judgments has *eo ipso* been established as an indisputable fact.' I do not think so. An analogy, which seems always at the back of Prof. Westermarck's mind, occurs on p. 59: it is between the pain caused by a fire which burns us and the moral emotion roused by the actions of our fellows. It does not seem particularly fortunate. Of course the pain is not in the fire; but what of that? Does it give rise to concepts? If it does, are they merely ' subjective? ' Similar passages are not far to seek. The very title—though it may not be Prof. Westermarck's—savours of the correspondence columns of the *Times,* in which Einstein is invoked to

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ratify any and every solution of the problem of agriculture or of the Sunday cinemas.

Perhaps Prof. Westermarck, tired of finding metaphysics apparently on the side of his more obstinate opponents, wishes, once and for all, to drag it over to his side. He might have paused, reflecting that it is perhaps within the province of time to reveal that his opponents are not metaphysically so blameless, after all. The problem of the relation between ethics and metaphysics, though important, is not too pressing. With no greater metaphysical equipment than he possesses here, Westermarck succeeded, in the *History*, in performing work of immense value. This is not, of course, to say that had that equipment been different or greater the work might not have been more valuable still.

The importance of *Ethical Relativity* may be that it will compel a final distinction between what is and what is not of value in the *History*. That work is above all a mass of evidence, in the light of which it is impossible to deny some connection between the emotions and the moral concepts. But what that connection is is by no means so clear. It is not clear that when philosophers claim that the emotions follow instead of preceding the concepts they are, as Westermarck would have it, putting the cart before the horse. What are carts? and what are horses? What, above all, is priority? These are questions that demand close and technical discussion; discussion more technical, at any rate, that Prof. Westermarck is willing to give them in *Ethical Relativity*.

JAMES SMITH.

I LOST MY MEMORY : The case as the Patient saw it. Anonymous (Faber and Faber, p. 306, 7/6d.).

This is a popularly written account of a case of loss of memory and its psycho-therapeutic treatment without deep psycho-analysis. It provides a good close-up of this kind of treatment, with its methods of free-association and dream-recording, and it emphasises the laboriousness of the treatment for all concerned. An interesting feature is the introspective account of the difference between the patient's true memory of events when he regained it and the mere knowledge of them which he had

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previously been able to build up from other people's accounts. It is an easily read book and it should be useful in popular teaching—for instance in W.E.A. classes.

SELECTIONS FROM REMY DE GOURMONT. Chosen and translated by Richard Aldington (Chatto and Windus, 3/6d.).

A popular selection from Remy de Gourmont has been for some time overdue in this country and the present volume forms a welcome addition to the *Phœnix Library*. It is unfortunate however that Mr. Aldington has tended to give undue space to those excerpts which illustrate his own views on sex, his own scepticism (*vide* introduction: 'So penetrated am I with the spirit of scepticism' . . .), and his own bourgeois conceptions of liberty. The lapse of a quarter of a century has made some of the 'daring' passages on love sound a little thin, and Gourmont's reaction to Socialism was somewhat naïve. The book contains plenty of stimulating material, but we could have done with less sex and more criticism.

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